

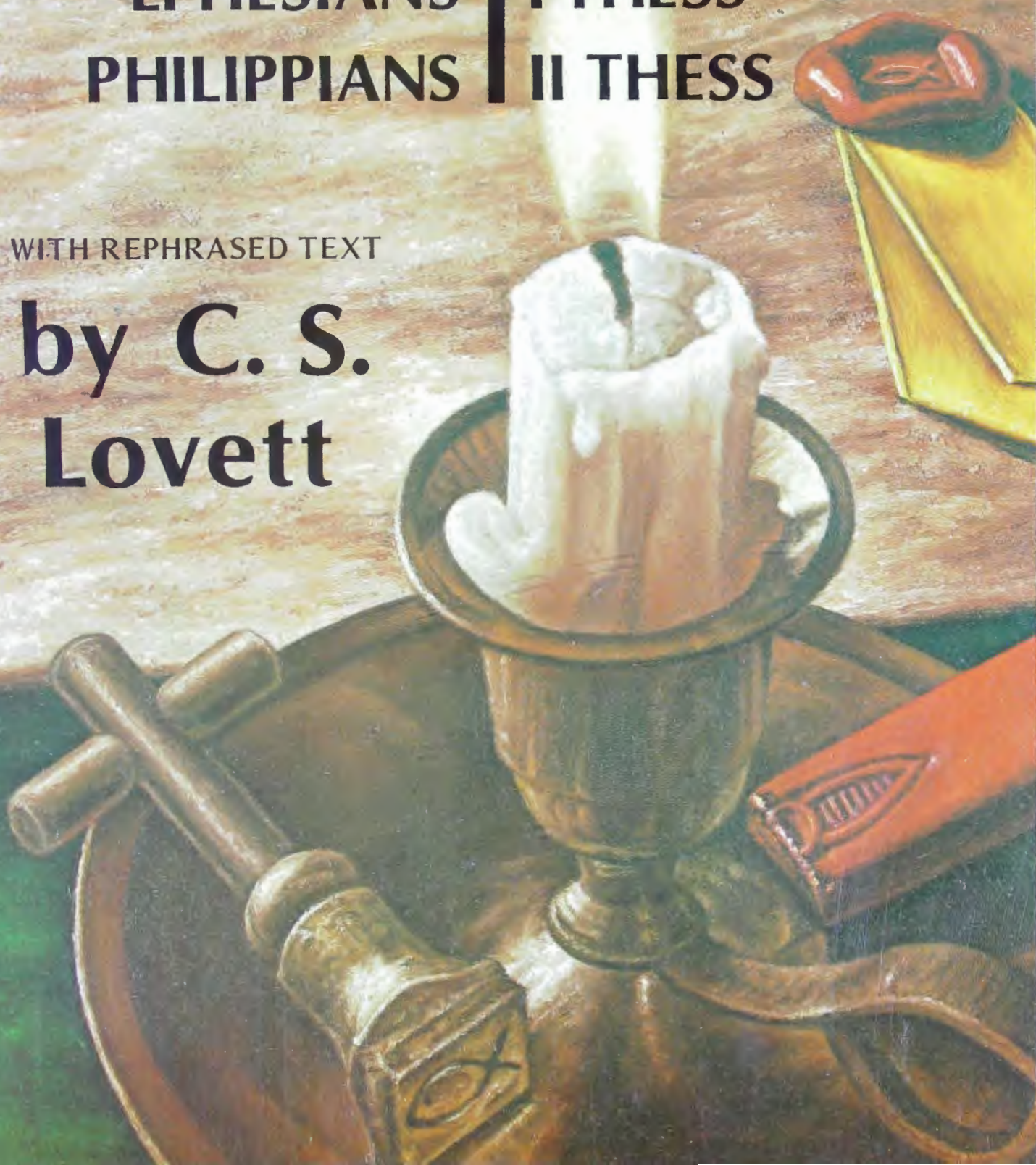
Lovett's Lights

on

GALATIANS	COLOSSIANS
EPHESIANS	I THESS
PHILIPPIANS	II THESS

WITH REPHRASED TEXT

by **C. S.
Lovett**





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C. S. Lovett

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DEALING WITH THE DEVIL

JESUS WANTS YOU WELL!

SOUL-WINNING MADE EASY

director of Personal Christianity

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PAUL AS A YOUNG MAN

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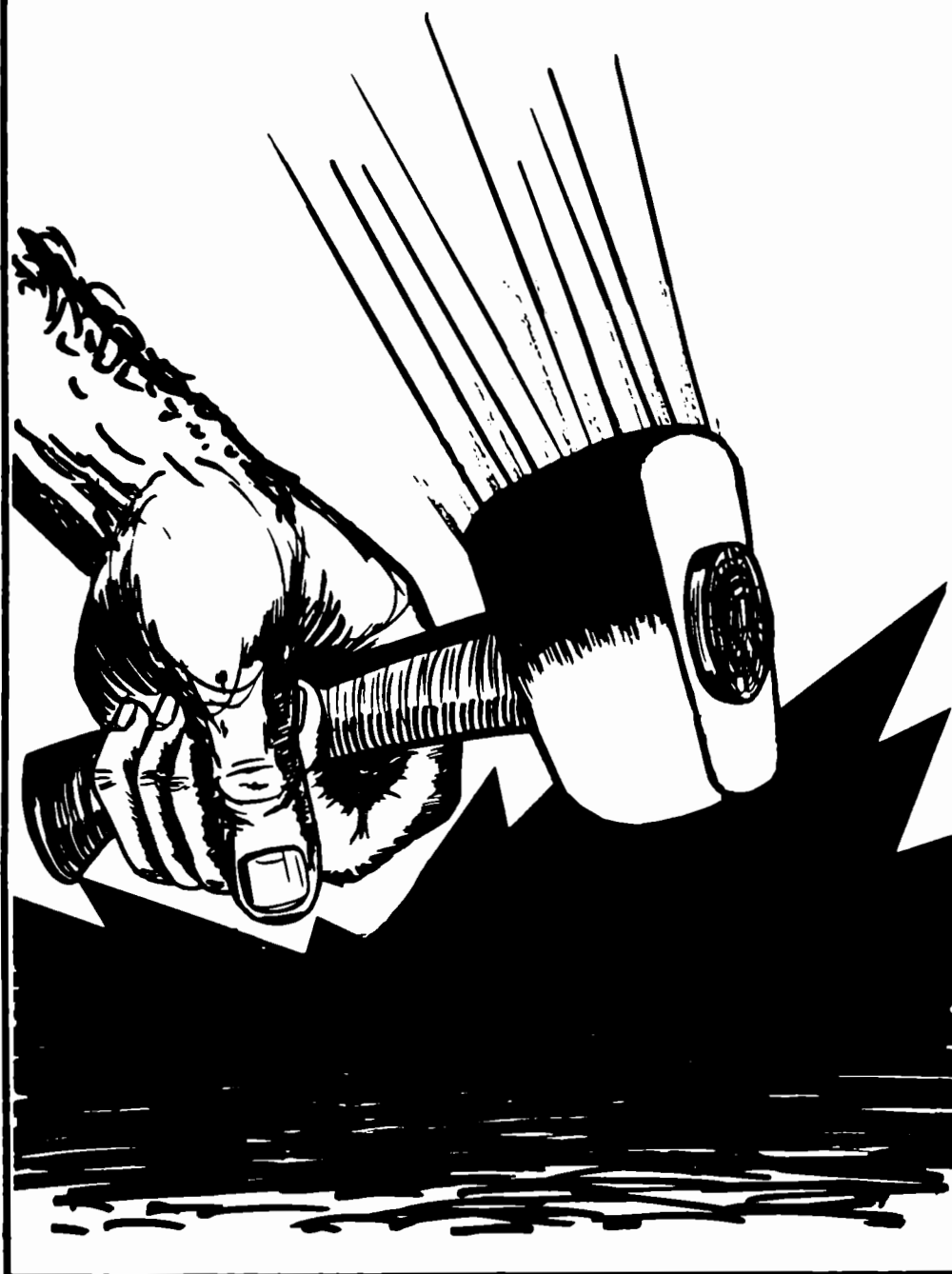
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GALATIANS

“THE HAMMER
OF THE
REFORMATION”



ANGRY READERS ONLY PLEASE . . .

To get the most out of Galatians, a reader should sense Paul's rage as he wrote. He was boiling when he penned these lines. We don't think of him as a man with enemies, but he had them—and they were vicious. There were Jewish teachers (false "Christians") who followed Paul, waiting for the right moment to move among his converts with enslaving doctrines. They were called Judaizers. Their ideas, if accepted by believers, cancelled Christian liberty and placed God's sons in bondage under Jewish laws.

The Judaizers

This name is given to those Jews who outwardly "accepted" Christ, but wanted Christianity to remain as a branch of Judaism. They didn't see how something established by God through Moses, and which had endured for 1400 years, could suddenly be **replaced** with anything as simple as faith in Christ. How could the towering giant of Judaism be instantly outmoded by a movement started by a group of fishermen commissioned by a Carpenter-rabbi? To their minds, salvation was of the Jews.

The Judaizers, therefore, were jealous for the Jews' religion, insisting the only way a person could become a real Christian was to become a Jew first. After a man was circumcised and embraced the Law of Moses, then he would have access to the Messiah. But apart

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from that, they felt there was no salvation. Consequently the Judaizers were **UNSAVED**.

Since the first Christians were nearly all Jewish, such an idea posed no real problem for them. They were already circumcised in infancy. All that remained was embracing Christ as the long awaited Messiah. They were raised in the old traditions and it was natural for them to continue in them **without adding** them to faith. For the Gentiles, though, it was a different story. They had not been circumcised, neither had they been raised in such traditions. To tell them they had to be circumcised and come under the Law of Moses, meant that faith in Christ was **NOT ENOUGH**, that there was more to salvation than believing in the Lord Jesus. If they had to be circumcised, then faith in Jesus was **NOT** the only ground of justification.

Paul explodes . . . !

A volcano of fury erupts within him. There's no time to lose. He knows the fickle character of his Galatian Christians. The new idea of circumcision could easily appeal to them. If he doesn't act swiftly, they might all be swept from the truth of the Gospel into a corrupted form of Christianity. He seizes his stylus and etches off a letter to the Galatians. It is to be circulated among the leaders and read to the congregations. As angry as he is, he words it carefully. His Galatians are very different from his converts elsewhere. They have to be handled differently.

Handled differently?

Yes. The Galatians were a peculiar breed. They were wandering Gauls until they settled down to become a Roman province in A.D. 25. Their background made them that way. In origin, they were fighting men, professional soldiers. They'd fight for either side, the cause didn't matter. This tended to make them a fickle people — extremely fickle. Paul knew by experience just how fickle they were, for when he first came to their area, they embraced him as a god. Their love for new ideas, particularly in religion, caused them to flock to him. They swarmed to his message, drawn by the novelty of it more than its truth. They had a built-in readiness to run to any teacher with new ideas. Hence their stand for the Gospel was vulnerable. No one knew this more than Paul.

Others have told us about the character of the Galatian people. Pagan literature is full of references to their impulsiveness, their readiness for new ideas. They became known for their eagerness to embrace a teaching on the basis of novelty rather than truth. Therefore when they were approached by men who contradicted the word of Paul, the new twist of ideas appealed to them. They went for it in wholesale fashion. While such a practice is safe enough in matters of philosophy, it is deadly when it comes to the Gospel of Christ. Fickleness is fatal for Christians. So he is enraged.

Paul insisted that Jesus belonged to the world, not merely to the Jews. For the sake of

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the Gentiles, he did his best to strip Christianity of its Jewishness. That's why his enemies (who no doubt came from Jerusalem) hated him so. When they had gained entrance into the Galatian churches they insisted on adding the rite of circumcision to faith in Christ. Thus they sought to destroy the very means by which Christ's death brings eternal life to men. The mixing of ANYTHING with faith cancels the simplicity needed for salvation. By adding ceremonial requirements to the Gospel, these Judaizers annulled the doctrine of salvation by faith.

In order for the Judaizers to advance their teachings, they had to discredit Paul. Otherwise it would simply be a matter of his word against theirs. So they attacked his credentials, claiming he did not represent the church, neither was he an official minister of Christ. He may be a disciple of the apostles, they said, but he is not one himself. Therefore Paul had to deal not only with the doctrinal error the false teachers were foisting upon the Galatians, he also had to defend his authority as an apostle.

So Paul writes

You can feel the force of his two-fisted attack upon the Judaizers. He has to counteract their deadly influence, and at the same time win back the fickle affections of his misled Galatians. It won't be easy. How can a man vent rage upon evil and woo back loved ones at the same time? Paul has to do both in his letter. He must use harsh severe language in

denouncing the false teachers, and at the same time show fatherly sympathy for his disaffected Galatians—in other words, “Be angry and sin not.”

Paul does it masterfully. In fact, the strange mixture of severity and gentleness he puts in this letter is perfect for the Galatians. They will be overawed by the authority he assumes over the false teachers, and won by his fatherly pleading. The approach ideally suits their temper and character. A different kind of Paul is presented to the Galatians in this letter and they were drawn to the novelty of it. The apostle was truly inspired when he authored it.

SO READ IT WITH EMOTION

Boil with Paul. Feel his fury. See if you can detect the rage behind his words. It's there. No doubt about that. In pouring out his feelings against the Judaizers, Paul gives us one of the strongest documents on Christian freedom ever written. No other book sets forth the truth of justification by faith as clearly and as convincingly. His phrases sizzle with conviction. The gloves are off. The crisis he faces forbids any double talk or roundabout language. His Galatians must be rescued before they are swept into legalism. So Paul forgets about silky words and goes to the heart of the matter with straight talk. Those who love the truth of justification by faith **plus nothing**, can turn to this book to refute all man-made theories of salvation by works.

Do we have Judaizers today? Not by name,

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but in principle—yes. The teachings may vary but we have those who would add to the simple faith of the Gospel, thereby destroying the very essence of Christianity. The corrupting principle is the same, only the requirements vary, whether water baptism, confirmation, certain manifestations of the Spirit, the keeping of sabbaths, or belonging to a particular denomination. Christians satisfied that salvation comes by faith plus nothing, do well to master the weapon of Galatians. Who knows what attacks are yet to be made upon the truth of salvation by **faith alone** as the days become more evil?

This book has been fittingly called the Magna Charta of Christian liberty. In the hands of Martin Luther and other brave leaders of his day, it proved to be the “Hammer of the Reformation.” So—when anyone tells you that faith alone in Christ is not enough, get mad—and read Galatians. You’ll be in just the right mood to share the feelings of the apostle Paul.

C. S. LOVETT

GALATIANS

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1 1. From Paul, an apostle commissioned and dispatched directly by Jesus Christ Himself and not by men or any human agency. God the Father, Who raised Jesus from the dead, appointed me to apostleship. 2. All the brethren here with me join in sending this word . . . TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA.

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APOSTLE. The false teachers (see intro.) denied Paul's apostleship. So his letter opens with a strong defense of his divine appointment. He would rather call himself "a bonds slave of Jesus Christ," but now with his authority challenged, he must pull rank. Some claimed Matthias was God's replacement for Judas the defector; that Paul could not be counted as one of The Twelve (Acts 1:26). But Matthias didn't meet the one condition needed for true apostleship—he was not commissioned by the Lord Jesus directly. Paul's name was not pulled out of a hat ("not by men"). He was ordained by heaven itself and "not by any human agency" as was Matthias. Jesus commissioned Paul AFTER God raised Him from the dead (Acts 9:6). Matthias had no such commission from the Lord.



BRETHREN. Paul reinforces his letter by saying the Christians ("brethren") with him were sending their "amen" with his words. Thus it is more than Paul's word against the Judaizers. He is joined by the other churches around him, who accept his apostleship. The Galatian churches would therefore be making themselves renegades by following teachings contrary to that of Paul. Note the absence of any words of praise which usually mark the opening of his letters. The apostle gets right to the point. He is eager to deal with the danger facing the Galatians.

"How, then, will Paul greet the Galatians!"

3. Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,



GRACE-PEACE. As a dividend is the by-product of owning stock, so is peace the by-product of God's grace. Grace must always precede peace. This is the order in all of Paul's salutations. No one can know genuine peace until first he experiences the grace of God. Before Paul fires a blast at his Galatians, he would have them feel a warmth of love behind this greeting. No matter what they are involved in, they still merit the grace and peace of God. However, they will truly need God's grace should they be deceived into forfeiting their liberty in Christ to enter the bondage of ritualistic Judaism. Though their souls are secure in Christ, they stand to lose their joy and intimacy with the Lord, should they seek to make their lives conform with the Jewish rules.

4. Who gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins that He might rescue us from the kingdom of evil. He did this according to the predetermined plan of our God and Father;
5. to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



GAVE HIMSELF. Jesus was both the Offering and the Offerer. He was the Giver, and also the Gift. He offered Himself to God as a sacrifice to obtain our release from Satan's evil kingdom, this world. The devil owns this world (1st John 5:19), he is its god (2 Cor. 4:4). Apparently the sacrificial death of Jesus was Satan's price (ransom) demanded for our release. Paul is building a case against those who would introduce WORKS into the salvation truth. How could man hope to add worth to the PERSON of Christ so that His offering would be more acceptable to God? Paul's point is, when it comes to our salvation, this is something Jesus accomplished BY HIMSELF.



RESCUE. Before salvation we are members of Satan's kingdom. We cannot escape by ourselves. Christ's death effects our release (Col. 1:13, 20). Our deliverance is two-fold: (1) deliverance from fellowship with the

world to fellowship with Christ, (2) deliverance from the world's fate—hell. Satan tried to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross by offering an alternate plan (Matt. 4:8, 9). But Jesus refused, electing to follow the "predetermined plan of God" instead. Our sonship in the divine family is the result of His obedience. The glory therefore is God's alone, for He conceived the redemption plan, executing it without any help from man at all. Part of God's glory would go to man if he in any way could help obtain his own salvation. As a brain surgeon cannot operate on his own brain, neither can a sinner make himself righteous. If he could, the glory would not belong entirely to God. Man would have to be credited for his part.

"Will Paul hide his feelings from the Galatians?"

6. You surprise me! I never dreamed you could shift yourselves so suddenly from Him Who called you by the grace of Christ and turn to a different sort of gospel.



SURPRISE. Paul knew the Galatians well. Yet now he finds himself shocked at how quickly they can change their minds about the Gospel. Instead of the customary words of praise, with which he begins his epistles, he turns to a rebuke. It is an ominous omission. Yet he is fatherly about it. He simply expresses surprise. The Greek indicates their shift from Christ has not yet occurred, but is in progress. Paul is shocked at two things: (1) that they would so quickly forsake freedom in Christ to follow teachers who want to place yokes about their necks, and (2) that they would willfully embark on a course sure to take them from Christ. Paul knew the Galatians could change their minds quickly, but this shift is shockingly fast.

7. Not that there is such a thing as a different gospel, there isn't. But there are people confusing your minds with talk of another approach to salvation. These mind-troublers distort the Gospel of Christ.



GOSPEL. In verse 6 Paul referred to the Judaizers' teaching as a "different sort of gospel." Now in verse 7 it is as if he is correcting himself. He uses the term "different gospel" only because the false teachers called their corrupted approach to salvation "the gospel." There can be but one kind of a \$10 bill. Anything else has to be counterfeit. So with the Gospel of Christ. It simply will not allow itself to be mixed with a doctrine of works. How could man possibly come up with a substitute for something God has provided. The addition of anything to the Gospel of Christ destroys it. As the adding of 1% strychnine to a glass of pure grape juice turns it into a fatal drink, so does the addition of works to the Gospel of Christ turn it into a soul-destroying teaching.

"Wow! Paul is letting go at the false teachers, isn't he!"

8. In fact, should we ourselves, or even an angel from heaven, come to you with a gospel which goes beyond that which we have already preached to you . . . **LET HIM BE DAMNED.**



DAMNED. Paul pronounces a curse on all who would corrupt the Gospel of Christ—including himself, those with him, or even angels. Personalities don't count when it comes to the truth of Christ. Rank is meaningless when choosing between truth and error. Now we see why he doesn't name the Judaizers. A contest of personalities is not the issue. The false teachers may have dropped the names of Peter, James and John, citing them, perhaps, as their authority. Paul says even an angel from heaven would be similarly condemned, so don't bring up names to me. As the blessing which comes from presenting the true Gospel is the greatest of all—eternal life—so is the curse which comes from distorting the Gospel sure to be the greatest of all—eternal death.

9. I know I have warned you of this before, but now it has to be repeated: if anyone preaches to you a gospel which is contrary or goes beyond that which you have already re-

ceived, let him be damned! 10. Now then, do those words sound like someone trying to win approval of men or God? Isn't it obvious I am not seeking the approval of men? If, after all these years, it were my ambition to be a man-pleaser, I wouldn't still be what I am—a bonds slave of Christ.



APPROVAL. Paul explains his repeated anathemas (curses) against the false teachers. The Judaizers charged he was nothing more than a crowd-pleaser, using the Gospel as a gimmick to attract a following. (Philosophers did that in those days.) On the basis of what he has just written he couldn't be called a man-pleaser. Such words do not conciliate men, they rile them. Then Paul adds, there is no way to preach what men want to hear and be the servant of Christ. When the Gospel is altered to match the desires of men it can no longer change them. The preaching of the pure Gospel is popular only with those who want to be God-pleasers. If Paul wanted to be a man-pleaser, he would have chosen a different career years before. Being a bondslave of Christ is hardly the course one takes if he wants the approval of men. Men follow others of great stature, not slaves.

"Paul didn't have any doubts about the authenticity of his teachings, did he?"

11. Let me make this very clear to you, my brethren; the Gospel I preached to you was not invented by any man. 12. No man gave it to me, no man taught it to me. To the contrary I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.



REVELATION. In denying the human origin of his Gospel, he claims equal rank with the other apostles. He denies receiving teaching from any man, anymore than the other apostles received their teachings from some man. He does not mean to say, however, that he received his complete doctrinal system the day he met Jesus on the Damascus

Road. Paul had many subsequent revelations by which he was taught from heaven. But all of them were secondary to that first revelation when Jesus called him to be an apostle. From that moment, Paul was **commissioned** to preach CHRIST. That fact embraces all other revelations received afterwards. Keep in mind he is defending his apostleship. He knows he is the 12th apostle and will use two chapters to prove it.

13. You have been told how it was with me back in the days when I was involved in Judaism. And particularly of my relentless persecution of the church of God, laying waste to it as I did my utmost to destroy it. 14. So fierce was my fanaticism for our national religion, that I surpassed many of my fellow Jews in practicing our ancestral traditions.



JUDAISM. In the opinion of scholars, Paul most likely had the greatest mind of his generation. Even though he was taught by revelation, he would be the last to say education was unnecessary. He was on his way to becoming the outstanding leader and thinker of the Jew's religion. He was headed for the heights of eminence in Pharisaism when he came face to face with Jesus on the Damascus Road. Then he saw how badly he had been deceived by the devil. Sincere though he was, he made himself an enemy of God by persecuting His church. The use of the singular "church" pictures the many churches under one Head, Christ. Paul was never able to forgive himself for those bitter days. He lived with the pain of what he had done to Jesus, even though the mercy of God covered it.



FANATICISM. Paul argues that his past proves the miraculous nature of his call. He was raised in rigid ritualism, just the opposite of the liberty of the Gospel. By virtue of his training and temperament he was the fierce enemy of Christianity. He threw himself into the task of persecuting the churches with consuming fanaticism. Paul stood to lose everything by forsaking Judaism. Only a miracle could have made him equally zealous for Christ. No human agency could produce such a change. It took an act of God, a

supernatural revelation of Christ Himself to transform this fanatical Jew into an apostle. With these words, he informs the Galatians his anti-jewish feelings do not stem from ignorance of Judaism, but from an all too intimate acquaintance with it. The "traditions" are not the Mosaic code, but the 600 or so Pharisaic traditions which had become engrafted on the Law.

"After Paul was commissioned by revelation, did he check with the other apostles for confirmation?"

15. After God called me by means of a special revelation, it then became clear how that by His grace I had been set apart even before my birth 16. to preach to the Gentiles. My commission is based on the pleasure of God Who chose first to reveal His Son to me and then through me. So clear was my call I did not feel the need to consult with other humans about it. 17. Rather than rush to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, I went off into Arabia. When I returned, it was not to Jerusalem, but Damascus.



SET APART. To show further how no human agency is involved in his commission, Paul says his apostleship is based on the pleasure of God. Who marked him for the task before he was born. Thus his apostleship was not a matter of his great qualifications. God was the sole agent. His plans were based on His omniscience. Paul knew nothing of this until his conversion on the Damascus Road. But once he had received Christ, so that his own soul was illumined, he could see his life per God's plan. Note the three stages: (1) Paul met the Son, (2) he received the Son, (3) he preached the Son. Those are the three stages of the Gospel. Many see Christ and never receive Him, others receive yet fail to declare Him. As far as Paul is concerned, his calling dates from his conversion. As far as God is concerned, he was called before he was born. Paul felt no need to rush off and get approval for what he had received. He didn't need human credentials, he had the Spirit of God.



ARABIA. To show his independence of the other apostles, Paul stresses he did not go to Jerusalem. It is not certain which "Arabia" is meant, but the most probable place was the Sinaitic peninsula, where Moses and Elijah had been before him. If so, then the Law, Prophecy and Gospel dispensations meet in one. The reason for the retreat is obvious, to reflect on the cataclysmic call he had just received and become intimate with the Christ he had hated for so long. He may have been there as long as three years, spending perhaps the same amount of time with the Lord the other apostles enjoyed. Surely he received many revelations during this interval. Conferences with church leaders could wait. He felt it more important to let the Lord condition him for the ministry by spending time in the seminary of prayer and meditation. This freed him from the binding influence of any church leaders.

"When did he finally go to Jerusalem?"

18. It was three years before I went up to Jerusalem and that was to get acquainted with Peter. I stayed with him for fifteen days.
19. During that time I didn't see any of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.
20. What I have written is a truthful account of my history. As God is my Judge, I lie not.



THREE YEARS. Paul's journey into Arabia was not recorded as such in the Book of the Acts. However it is likely included in the "many days" Luke says he spent at Damascus (Acts 9:23). The 3 years is to be reckoned from his conversion, for he is trying to show it was 3 years before he went to Jerusalem. When he did go, it was to get acquainted with Peter, not to learn anything from him. Two weeks would hardly be long enough for a course of instruction. On the other hand it would be long enough for Peter to examine Paul to determine if he were teaching error. Had he found Paul to be a deceiver, he would have been bound to declare him before the world. If Paul did hold any error, both James and Peter would have warned the churches of him. They didn't, and that's the point. James was not one of the twelve apostles. But as the "Bishop of Jerusalem," he enjoyed enough prestige to be called an apostle.



LIE NOT. The Judaizers had no doubt told the Galatians Paul spent a long time with Peter and received all he knew from him. Paul swears his visit was no longer than 15 days, and that he saw no one save Peter and James. Paul wanted to see Peter, the apostle to the Jews. Why? Peter told him of the passion, betrayal, trials, agony of the garden, and the horror of the cross, the resurrection events, the forty days, the ascension and the baptism of fire in the upper room. Paul told of his Damascus road experience and the things which happened in the desert as he fellow-shipped with the risen Lord. The two men must have wept and prayed much together.

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21. Afterwards I traveled into parts of Syria and Cilicia. 22. As yet, I was still unknown by sight to the Christian congregations in Judea. 23. They knew me by reputation only, having heard from others that "the man who used to persecute us is now going about preaching the faith he once tried to destroy," 24. and they praised God for what He had done in me.



TRAVELED. After visiting Peter, Paul didn't stay in Jerusalem, but went North and West toward Asia Minor. He probably went first to Caesarea, the main seaport and from there to Tarsus in Cilicia, his birthplace. He'd been away from home for three years. From there he went back to Damascus through Syria. This would account for his being unknown to the Judean churches. Far from being a disciple of the apostles, he wasn't even known to the churches in the area where the apostles were doing their chief work. They didn't call him Saul, but referred to him as their former persecutor. The wolf had now become a shepherd and the sheep were giving thanks to God. He might have added, but didn't. . . "Their attitude is certainly different than yours." It is a striking argument that the churches of Judea thanked God for Paul, while the Gentile churches which he founded were taking heed to the hateful Judaizers defaming him.

"How long was it before Paul finally conferred with any of the leaders of the church?"

2 1. Then, after an interval of fourteen years, I went up to Jerusalem once again. Barnabas was with me and we took Titus along also. 2. This trip was made in obedience to a revelation. The Spirit led me to go first to the reputed pillars of the church for a private session. I laid before them very frankly the exact message I preach to the Gentiles. I couldn't afford to have this mission frustrated and allow my trip to be in vain.



FOURTEEN YEARS. Paul allowed 14 years to pass before he sought to have his Gentile ministry ratified by the mother church. During those years he felt no need for any confirmation by the other apostles, so confident was he of his calling in Christ. Finally the Spirit bade him go, arranging for him to attend an apostolic council on Gentile circumcision as a delegate from the church at Antioch. This trip coincides with the one in Acts Fifteen where Luke records Paul's trip to a church convention in A.D. 50 or 51. Whereas Luke records the **public** transactions taking place in the open convention, Paul here speaks of his **private** session and agreement with the apostles. Paul declared to them what he preached, exactly as it had been given to him by revelation. Should the mother church disapprove his teaching, his trip to Jerusalem would have been for nothing—in vain. It would have undone all of his work among the Gentiles. Thus he felt it was important to meet privately with the other apostles and make sure he was in agreement with them before laying his work before an open convention.



PRIVATE. What a rugged apostle! This giant of the faith went to this convention ready to defy the whole structure of Judaism. See how the Spirit gave him the wisdom to secure the approval of his ministry before it came to the floor of the convention. Consider his courage in taking along Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, as living proof of the Gospel's power! To have this unclean Gentile

stand before the mother church was shocking! But if he could have Titus received into fellowship right there on the sacred soil, it would be a damaging blow against the Judaizers. The Galatians no doubt knew Titus and of his Gentile birth, hence the mention of his name in this epistle. What happened to Titus at this council would be of key importance to Paul's readers.

3. But I hadn't run in vain, for the council did not require my companion Titus, though he was a Greek, to be circumcised. 4. In fact, the matter would have been easily settled had it not been for the presence of some false brethren who slyly affiliated themselves with the convention to spy on the liberty we have in Christ Jesus. It was their ambition to enslave us with their rituals by demanding the circumcision of Titus. 5. But we didn't budge an inch from our stand in order to maintain the purity of the Gospel for your sake.



CIRCUMCISION. The Judaizers made circumcision the basis of all they sought to impose on Gentile Christians. They said it was as vital as keeping the Law. All other Jewish requirements rested on the act of circumcision. It was fortunate that Paul was able to concentrate on this single issue. If he could demonstrate that circumcision had no spiritual value for Gentiles, then the rest of the Jewish requirements were useless also. If circumcision was not a ground of justification, then none of the other rites had any validity either. This council at Jerusalem sounded the death knell for the circumcision of Gentiles. The matter was ended forever as far as the apostles and the mother church were concerned. By referring to the council's action in the case of Titus, Paul tears down the edifice of Jewish ritual the false teachers sought to add on to the Gospel.



DIDN'T BUDGE. The demand that Titus be circumcised came from "a sect of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5). At least three parties were present at the convention: (1) those favoring Gentile freedom, (2) those insisting

on circumcision, i.e., the Judaizers, (3) those favoring an appeasement, wanting Paul to set aside his scruples for the sake of convention unity. Paul knew the ambition of the Judaizers was to bring Christianity under the yoke of Judaism. Judaism was over. And to make any part of it essential to salvation would destroy the Gospel. This is why he secured the support of the apostles before letting the matter reach the floor of the convention. Too much was at stake for Paul to risk any other course. His firm stand on Titus forced the convention to settle the issue one way or the other.



TITUS. Picture this unclean "dog" of a Gentile standing with Paul before the assembly! What a marvelous specimen of the Holy Spirit's work! Then hear the rumble as Judaizers stir up the appeasers. Paul deliberately provoked this controversy. Then see the apostles rise to stand with Paul. He is one of them now. What a sight that must have been! By this device (Titus), Paul forces the headquarters of Christianity to declare that "circumcision is nothing," that Gentile Christians are free from the ritual law. Imagine how Titus felt being welcomed into the brotherhood on the sacred soil of Jerusalem! In going along with the non-circumcision of Titus, the council ratified Gentile freedom, removing it forever from under the yoke of Judaism. That was enough to cut the ground from under the Judaistic teachers of Galatia, and any others who would impose external rites as essential to salvation.

"Did the Council also ratify Paul's apostleship?"

6. Now as to what the leaders of the convention — it matters little to me that I don't know their exact titles, God makes no distinctions between men on the basis of rank — these leaders, I say, were unable to add anything to my ministry. 7. Quite the contrary, they recognized that I had been commissioned to take the Gospel to the Gentiles as surely as Peter had been commissioned to preach to the Jews. 8. The same power which made Peter an apostle to the Jews, also made me an apostle to the Gentiles.



LEADERS. Paul is not demeaning the apostles, he's one himself. He knows the glory of that call. But he does not want his readers to think of him as overshadowed by the rank of the other Eleven. Instead, he makes it perfectly clear he is equal to them in every way, so much so they were not able to tell him anything he didn't know, or grant him some kind of authorization he didn't already enjoy. To the contrary, they acknowledged that he was as fully an apostle as Peter, even though he did have a different ministry. His commission was as fully certified by the power of God as was Peter's. They further recognized that God had indeed commissioned him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles without requiring circumcision.

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"Then did the other apostles acknowledge Paul's equality with them?"

9. And so when James, Peter, and John, the acknowledged pillars of the church, were satisfied that God had graciously appointed me to my own work, they joined their right hands with Barnabas and me concluding a formal agreement that our mission was to the Gentiles, while theirs was to the Jews. 10. They did make one suggestion, that we not forget the poor. That, of course, was something I have always been eager to do.



RIGHT HANDS. What a moment in Gospel history! James, Peter, John and Paul stand with hands clasped in official fellowship. The other apostles give full sanction to Paul's ministry, acknowledging his commission, received by revelation, to be identical with the one they received from Jesus in Person. Can you picture those four writers of most of the N.T. standing there in such perfect accord! The clasping of hands signifies compactual agreement in receiving Paul into the apostleship. The session ends on a note of unity with all of them pledging help for the impoverished Christian Jews of Judea, for famine was in the land. On an earlier occasion Paul had collected money for the relief of these very people. Thus he departs from the convention with

his commission confirmed by the mother church and his apostleship ratified by the other Eleven. The Judaizers afflicting Paul's converts in Galatia are likely the same ones defeated at this council. Their defeat served to make them bitter enemies of Paul. They tried to destroy his work wherever he went.

"In what other way did Paul prove his apostleship?"

11. Afterwards, when Peter came to Antioch, I had to take a stand against him, for he was clearly in the wrong. 12. He had been eating with the Gentile Christians until a delegation of Jewish Christians, who were friends of James, came to visit us. When they arrived, he began to withdraw from the Gentile brethren and wouldn't eat with them, because he was afraid of what these advocates of circumcision might think.



STAND. Paul now recalls an event which he mentions to climax the defense of his apostleship. The occasion was a time when he had to rebuke Peter publically. It occurred sometime after Peter had stood with him declaring Gentile freedom from the Law. Peter, who knew by revelation (Acts 10:1-11:18) that the ceremonial barriers between Jew and Gentile were abolished, acted out of fear and hypocrisy in a way that scandalized the Gospel in Antioch. In his actions (not doctrine) he demonstrated there was a difference between natural-born Jews and Gentiles by refusing to take communion with Gentiles, when some of James' friends arrived from Jerusalem. This act could split the church. It was a crisis and Paul acted accordingly. He rebuked Peter publically, for the scandal was an open one. Peter's greatness is shown in that he accepted the rebuke. There is no record of any opposition from him. Paul's rank is manifest when he is seen rebuking the apostle to the Jews.

13. So great was the force of Peter's example that other Jewish Christians began to betray their own convictions about Gentile liberty and

followed him in this evil action. The deception was so sweeping that even Barnabas was led to join in the hypocrisy.



EXAMPLE. It should be noted that Peter did not do this action out of conviction, but FEAR. He dreaded the reproach of those visiting from Jerusalem. Many there, including James, believed natural-born Jews were under obligation to observe the Law of meats. By joining them, Peter behaved as though he felt the Gentile Christians were still separate from Jewish Christians. He gave no explanation, but acted in cowardice. His great rank made the action divisive. He stumbled other Jewish Christians by his action. So great was his influence even Barnabas, Paul's fellow-champion in asserting the freedom of Gentiles and possibly the pastor of the Antiochian church, was swept into the evil. This may have been the beginning of the break between Paul and Barnabas, for they never again appear together after this. The disgrace of Peter's action in withdrawing from the agape or frequent Lord's Supper, is that he treated the Gentile Christians as though they were unclean.

"You mean Paul openly rebuked the apostle Peter for this action?"

14. So when I saw how their action did not square with the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter in the hearing of everyone: "What right do you have to compel the Gentiles to live like Jews, when you, a natural-born Jew, have all this time been living like a Gentile?"



COMPEL. Peter had no thought of compelling the Gentile Christians to forsake their freedom in Christ. He thought only to protect himself against criticism by the visitors. But his high rank made his actions a moral compulsion to which new converts would be prone to yield. Without realizing it, Peter was jeopardizing the doctrine of grace. His conduct, along with the other Jews, amounted to a denial of the truth of the Gospel. Though Paul loved Peter, he had to deliver a public rebuke. He saw a weakening of the basic tenet of salvation through faith in Christ **only**. Didn't Peter

know Christ tore down the spiritual fence between natural-born Jews and Gentiles? Yes, but fear of Jewish censure made him play the hypocrite. He was careless, not realizing how deadly his hypocrisy was.

"Was that the end of the rebuke or is there more?"

15. "You and I, Peter, as natural-born Jews, always looked down on Gentile sinners.

16. We prided ourselves on being religious in God's eyes because we performed the requirements of the Law. Then we came to see ourselves as sinners who had to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ, just like anyone else, rather than by doing what the Law demanded. We came to the realization that no human being can make himself acceptable to God by observing legal requirements of any kind.

17. Has not our own experience of being justified in Christ taught us that we are sinners as surely as the Gentiles? Does Christ then become a minister of sin because He turns us from trusting in the Law for salvation to humbling ourselves before Him as sinners? God forbid!"



GOD FORBID. Paul's argument is brilliant. He asks Peter: was Jesus wrong in leading us Jews from our legal righteousness to come to Him as sinners? And because we have forsaken the Law to see ourselves as sinners like the Gentiles, does that mean Christ has led us into sin? The idea is blasphemous, utterly repulsive to the Christian mind. But Paul doesn't hesitate to use it to shock Peter to his senses. By withdrawing to eat with the Jewish Christians, he was indicating that the Jewish Law of meats was still obligatory, when in fact it was observed purely for the sake of its benefits. On the surface at least, his action suggested one should not abandon his legal righteousness to trust Christ completely. Peter was demonstrating that one must not trust

Christ fully, but maintain some spiritual safety under the Law. This is why Paul had to rebuke him so sternly.



TAUGHT US. From verse 15 to the end of the chapter, Paul continues his rebuke of Peter, or, at the very least, gives the gist of it. These words directed against the great apostle of the Jews would have a startling effect on Paul's readers. If he can assume such authority over Peter, he has every right to take similar authority over the Judaizers plaguing his Galatian churches. Peter was guilty of teaching by example what the false teachers presented as doctrine. If Peter can be rebuked for that, the Judaizers will deserve to be denounced. Thus Paul not only defends his apostleship by daring to rebuke Peter, he also delivers a telling blow against the false teachers. They were guilty of something far worse than that for which Peter was rebuked.

18. "To the contrary, Peter, I would prove myself an awful sinner were I to start rebuilding my justification under the Law after once having torn it all down to place my complete trust in Christ."



SINNER. To soften his charge, Paul refers to himself instead of Peter. He observes there is no sin in going from Law to grace, as Jesus had led them, but there is terrible sin in going from grace back to Law, as Peter's action demonstrated. The man who tears down a bridge and then rebuilds it, admits he made an awful mistake in tearing it down in the first place. Again, returning to legal bondage after receiving the grace of Christ, is like a man who has been pardoned, returning to prison to serve out the balance of a life sentence. Such an act is stupid for it cancels the effect of the pardon. The very turning back to Law indicates there is no salvation in Christ. Imagine the effect of these words, though addressed to Peter, on the Galatians who were in danger of doing this very thing!

"Is Paul referring to a life totally apart from the Law?"

19. "The Law killed me. It declared me a sin-

ner and slew me. So far as the Law is concerned, I'm a dead man. Therefore I am completely released from its requirements and free to live for God."



KILLED ME. Imagine a medical machine that diagnosed your illness and then killed you because it found you sick. That's the way the Law works. It reveals one a sinner when he fails to measure up to its requirements, and then slays him, for it also carries the death penalty for sin. The Law offers no help for sinners. What can men do then? Abandon the Law to find life in Christ. Therefore people pass through three stages: (1) prior to Law—sinful, but ignorant of it, (2) under the Law—sinful and conscious of it, longing for an escape, (3) free from the Law—justified in Christ. Inasmuch as no law can touch a man it has slain, this verse speaks of our spiritual safety in Christ. There is no way for Christians to be slain a second time by the "Law of sin and death" (the Mosaic code), once they have died to that Law in Christ.



LIVE FOR GOD. Paul contrasts "Law" with "God." Those two terms represent two different kinds of life. As long as one lives under one, it is not possible to live under the other. Yet, there is no escape from under the Law except by death. A man must suffer this penalty himself (go to hell) or receive Christ's death as his own. Receiving the death of Christ places one beyond the Law. However the new freedom is not one to sin (lawlessness), but from sin. A Christian is not free to live as he wants, but as he ought. If we die "in Christ," then positionally we live "in Christ." To realize we are holy in **position**, (in Christ) should move us to become holy in **condition** (in the world). While death to the Law (justification) comes instantly, death to sin (sanctification) is a slow, day by day process.

"How did Paul die to the Law! What sort of a death-experience placed him beyond the Law!"

20. "I am crucified with Christ as surely as though I were on the cross with Him. Yet I am

alive, but not because my old life somehow managed to survive. It didn't. I am alive now because Christ lives within me. Yes, you see me continuing to live in the flesh, but my real life is by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and sacrificed Himself for me."



CRUCIFIED-ALIVE. These two words are dramatized whenever communion is served. Taking the broken bread pictures receiving Christ's death. When He came into our hearts we actually received His death. It is now our death as surely as though we died on the cross with Him. That is what makes us dead to the Law and beyond its reach. Taking the cup pictures the receiving of His life. It is having His life that makes heaven possible. A death alone would not equip us for heaven or fellowship with God. It is Christ's nature (Himself) that makes it possible for us to live the new life—His life. Paul is here speaking of the new life he now lives, because he shares the holy nature of the Lord within him. The Law can't make a man holy, it can only demand he be holy.



FLESH. Paul says his body is a fleshly mask which hides a brand new man. It is not Saul the Jew, people now see, but Paul the Christian. He is a new creation who lives by the life of the indwelling Christ. Paul explains that the new creation (Paul) lives in a new environment—**FAITH.** This is the sustaining element of the new man, just as flesh is the sustaining element of the old. He calls Jesus the Son of God to highlight His life-giving power. It warms Paul's heart to speak of Jesus' sacrifice which proves God's love for him. See how he takes to himself the love that belongs to the whole world. This is the height of faith's achievement. Jesus is indeed the personal friend of each of us. We feel as if He died for us alone.

21. "I refuse to annul the grace of God! For if it were possible for a man to be made righteous under the Law, then Christ died for nothing!"



ANNUL. Though referring to himself, Paul is accusing Peter of cancelling the grace of God. Christ's death was necessary because the Law couldn't justify sinners. If it could, then Jesus' death was entirely superfluous and useless. These verses above (14-21), are admittedly hard to translate. They constitute Paul's remonstrance against Peter's reasserting the obligation to live under the Law (by acting as though the Christian Gentiles were yet unclean) after once abandoning it to trust Christ. He has used two full chapters to defend his apostleship, climaxing with this rebuke of Peter. Surely no one could question his authority now. The Galatians would be spellbound by his appropriation of rank and give heed to his words. The approach is perfect for their fickle hearts.

"Is Paul ready to start teaching now?"

3 1. You stupid Galatians, have you lost your senses! The truth of Christ's death was painted before you as big as a billboard. It was as clear as if He had been crucified in front of your eyes. Now then, who has hypnotized you? 2. Answer me one thing: when you came to Christ and received the Spirit, was it because you observed the Law or because you believed the Gospel?



STUPID. His apostleship artfully defended, Paul wades into his Galatians. Have you lost your wits, he asks? Everything they have received so far is based on what Christ has done for them, not what they have done for Him. As their teacher, Paul knows how vividly he portrayed Christ crucified, as though they had been at Calvary. Everything they presently enjoy is based on that glorious fact—and they know it. Paul reckons the only reason they would trade the Gospel of grace for a gospel of dead works is because they have been hypnotized. No one in his right mind would do such a thing. To jar them from their stupor he asks: did you receive the Spirit by **DOING** or by **BELIEVING**? They were fully aware that the forgiveness of sins and sonship in Christ come via the Spirit. And they didn't do one thing

to receive the Spirit other than believe the Gospel. Surely you must be under some kind of a spell, says Paul.

3. After having begun life in the Spirit, do you now expect to bring yourselves to perfection by resorting to fleshly rituals and regulations? 4. And what about the persecutions you suffered in the beginning? Were they for nothing? I can't believe you mean to throw all that away.



BEGUN. If one begins a life by means of the Holy Spirit, it is only reasonable such a life cannot be completed by any other agency. What the Holy Spirit begins, only He can complete. In effect Paul is saying, "Do you think by performing rites (circumcision, etc.) and ceremonies you can bring to completion that which only the Spirit could start?" That's like asking, can a fish swim on land? It's impossible. Then he asks about the persecutions the Galatians suffered for Christ, as did all in those days. It would have all been for nothing, he says, if they could have been saved by practicing Judaism. Indirectly he is asking, "Why throw away all the rewards you gained suffering for the Name of Jesus? Are you ready to trade them off for the worthless codes of Judaism?"

5. Answer this too, if you will: when God imparts His Spirit to people, enabling them to perform miracles, does He do so because they have observed the Law or because they have believed the Gospel?



IMPARTS. Paul's question has an obvious answer: the Galatians didn't even know the Law, much less receive the Spirit because they observed it. The Galatians were already enjoying the confirming gifts of the Spirit, the Law was still unknown to them. Thus the charisma of the Spirit belongs exclusively to the Gospel. The Law offers no experience with the Spirit. On the other hand, those receiving Christ via the Gospel, thrill to the "witness of the Spirit" the

instant they are saved (1st John 5:10). If the Spirit cannot come by Law, then neither can justification, for they go together. If the Spirit comes by faith only, then so does justification. Consequently, those passing over to the Gospel from Judaism may receive the Spirit, but no one can receive the Spirit by doing the works of the Law. So again Paul decries the foolishness of forsaking the Living Gospel to embrace the dead works of Judaism.

"Then how were men justified before the Gospel era arrived!"

6. Consider Abraham and how he lived by faith. He was declared righteous because he believed God. 7. Therefore know this: those who believe God, the children of faith, are the real children of Abraham.



BELIEVED GOD. Abraham, the first Jew, was justified **BEFORE** the Law was given. How? By faith, i.e., he believed God. Note how he was circumcised **AFTER** he was declared righteous (Rom. 4:11). Thus, faith was established as God's means of justification before the Law was given. The Jews, however, felt they shared in Abraham's justification because they were his literal descendants. They counted on the rite of circumcision (the covenant sign between Abraham and God) to make them immune from the Law's penalty. Now Paul was as strongly aware as any Jew that the promise belonged to the children of Abraham. But what makes a person a son of Abraham? Paul answers that by asking another question: what was it that brought the blessing to Abraham in the first place? Faith, of course. Therefore those exhibiting like faith are the true sons (also heirs) of Abraham. Literal descendancy does not automatically bring the blessing of Abraham, but faith does.

8. Long ago the Scriptures anticipated God's justification of the Gentiles by faith. For God announced this good news to Abraham when He said, "Through you shall all the nations be blessed." 9. And now that has come to

pass, for all who live by faith are justified along with Abraham, the believer.



THROUGH YOU. It was God's intention that Israel, by virtue of her natural descent from Abraham, should be a people of faith. In His own time, God meant for this people to receive the Holy Spirit to become a quickened nation in which God Himself lived. But alas, Israel, as a nation, turned from trusting God for righteousness, to seek her own righteousness under the law. With the promised Holy Spirit coming only by way of faith of Abraham, Israel forfeited her exalted position as the heir to this promise. However, this forfeiture did not affect the Gentiles. In His promise to Abraham, God included the Gentiles. Yet, they too would receive the Spirit only as they exhibited the same faith as Abraham. Paul is eager to show that it was God's intention for all nations to receive the Spirit. This point Peter made clear in his Pentecostal address (Acts 2:39). Paul argues: the promise of the Spirit had nothing to do with the Law, having been made to Abraham long before the Law was given. And it is by the Spirit that life and the blessings of God come to man.

"Then what do those living under the Law receive for their efforts?"

10. On the other hand, those seeking to be justified by their obedience to the Jewish Law, live under a curse. "Cursed is everyone," says the Scripture, "who fails to carry out every single thing the Book of the Law requires."



CURSED. A curse is the opposite of blessing. The faith-life offers blessing, life under the Law brings only a curse. Law and faith work on different principles. Justification by faith is based on what God does for man, whereas justification under Law is based on what man does for God. They proceed in different directions. The Law requires perfect obedience in all things—continually. It demands perfection. There is no room for failure. Seeking righteousness under the Law is like a man scaling a cliff—one slip and he's dead—for the Law demands the full penalty

for even the tiniest transgression. He who violates any part of the Law is guilty of breaking the whole Law (Ja. 2:10). As breaking a single link causes a chain to fail, so does breaking a single requirement of the Law cause one's righteousness to crumble.

11. Now then, isn't it clear that no man can make himself righteous before God by means of the Law? And the more so when you regard the Scripture's firm declaration, "The righteous man lives by his faith." 12. The Law, on the other hand, is not a matter of believing, but of doing. For the Scripture clearly says, "The man who would live by the Law must do what it commands."



CLEAR. Paul climaxes his first blast against justification by works (Law) with the quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, which clearly says faith alone makes a man righteous in God's sight. But the Law does not consider faith. To the contrary, the Law considers only works, rigidly enforcing every last one of its enactments so that it is based entirely on doing, not believing. If righteousness comes by believing only, then it is impossible to be justified under the Law. Paul says it is absurd to seek justification under a system which only has the power to condemn. But laws are like that. Take our tax laws. Pay your taxes faithfully for 30 years, but fail once and the law will penalize you. Are you rewarded for your 30 faithful years? No. You were merely doing what you were supposed to. No one is rewarded for that.

"Wow! Then is everyone under the curse of the Law until he receives the Spirit by faith!"

13. Christ rescued us from the curse of the Law by making Himself a curse for us when He was crucified. The Law is clear on that, too:

**"CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON
A TREE"**



CURSED. Paul has mentioned two curses in connection with the Law: (1) upon all failing to fulfill the Law's conditions, (2) upon those hung upon a tree. This second curse does not refer to hanging, for the Jewish method was stoning. It refers rather, to the Jews' custom of hanging an executed malefactor's corpse on a tree to brand him publicly as a lawbreaker. While Jesus did not break the Law Himself, He did accept the total guilt of us all as Lawbreakers, for "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6b). Thus both curses fell on Christ: the first, which bespeaks the GUILT of sin and the second, which bespeaks the PUNISHMENT for sin. The cross fulfilled the second curse for it was commonly referred to as a tree. Paul's point is that Jesus bore everything for us with respect to the Law, so that it no longer threatens us in any way.

14. And why did He become this curse? That in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might be made available to the Gentiles, that we all might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.



IN CHRIST. Note how the blessing does not come FROM Christ, but is available only as one is IN Christ. When a man comes to Jesus, two amazing things happen: (1) he is baptized into Christ (2) Christ indwells him. This is precisely as Jesus said it would be. In the days of His flesh, He told His disciples repeatedly that, even as He stood before them, His Father was in Him and He was in His Father (John 14:10, 11). Then He said a coming day (Pentecost) would find Him in them and they would be in Him, in exactly the same relationship (John 14:20). Paul is saying that believers have the JUSTIFICATION which Abraham enjoyed and also the SPIRIT which was promised. Abraham received justification, but not the Spirit, for the Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). After Pentecost, Jews and Gentiles alike could receive Christ (in the Spirit) to experience both justification and sonship (1st John 3:2).

"What, if anything, did the Law do to the promise God made to Abraham?"

15. Brethren, permit me to illustrate this from everyday life. Consider a business agreement. Even though the contracting parties are merely men, no one legitimately sets the agreement aside or adds fresh provisions to it. 16. On the other hand, consider God's (3 fold) promise to Abraham and his Descendant. By the way, notice He did not say, "descendants," as if to suggest a number of people were involved. He said, "Descendant," which is singular, meaning but one person only — Christ.



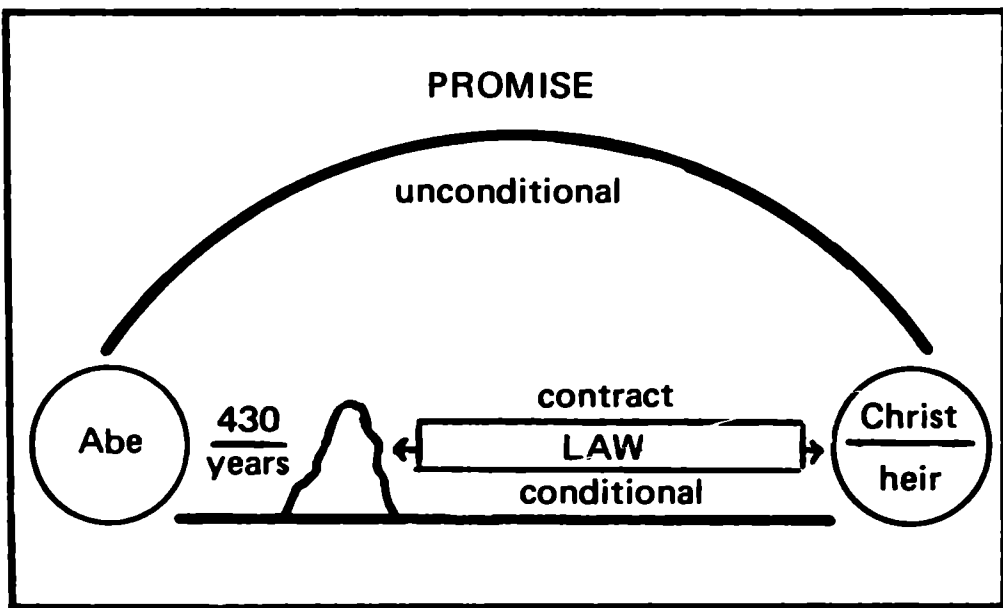
ILLUSTRATE. Paul is relaxing now, having let off steam. His tone is softer. First, his Galatians were "fools" (Vs. 1) now they are "brethren." Resorting to a legal analogy from daily life, he argues that even in business there is a big difference between a contract and a will. A contract has binding conditions between **two parties**, while a will is **one man's** promise to his heirs. If the Law, a contract between God and Israel and made many years later, could somehow invalidate His sworn promise to Abraham, God's integrity would be at stake. If the works of the Law have anything to do with justification, then God's pledge to Abraham and Christ is broken. If God's promise to one man can be voided, because He later makes an agreement with different heirs, then God's honor is in question. But God cannot be untrue to His own nature. The promise to Abraham is as valid as the fact that God will not lie to Himself.

17. As I was saying, God's promise is like a will. Once God ratified it, it could not be canceled or abrogated by a contract with someone else, entered into four hundred and thirty years later. 18. You can see why this is so. If God's promised gift to Abraham in any way depended on performance under the Jewish Law, then it is no longer an inheritance, but something that has to be earned. However,

the fact is, God promised this inheritance to Abraham with no strings attached.



INHERITANCE. The promise was not made to Abraham alone, but to one other Person, his Heir. If the word "heirs" had been used, then national Israel would have been intended. But the promise was to a sole Heir, Christ. This means that the promise cannot be separated from Jesus in any way. As the solitary Heir, He becomes the universal Heir, inheriting the promise for His people. It follows then, for anyone to participate in the promise, he must be "in Christ." How does one get there? He is baptized (placed—immersed) there by the promised Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This was not possible until the diffusion of Christ at Pentecost. After that, any Jew or Gentile could receive the Lord via the Spirit and be born into the family of God. Christ, the Head of the spiritual family inherited God's promise to share it with all who are in Him, who are "joint-heirs" (Rom. 8:17).



"If the Law and the promises are separate matters, what was the purpose of the Law? Are the two in any way connected?"

19a. Why then was the Law given? It was added to the redemption program to make men conscious of sin and long for a Savior. Yet it was just a temporary provision, meant to last

only until the arrival of Abraham's heir, the One to Whom the promises had been made.



ADDED. This is the tricky word. The Judaizers said the Law was added to the promise; that men not only had to believe in Jesus, but also keep the Law if they were to come under the promise. Paul argues the Law was but a temporary addition, **not to the promise**, but to the overall plan of God. It was therefore incidental to the promise, not a part of it. Its purpose was to get men ready for the coming of Abraham's heir. Men were getting too accustomed to sin, so the Law was added to reveal the extent of their evil and turn wrongdoing into legal offenses with strict penalties attached. The Law was like a mirror. It could show you how dirty you were, but it couldn't make you clean. The intention was that men, seeing how sinful they were, would yearn for redemption.

19b. Angels dictated the terms of the Law to a human mediator thereby solemnizing a conditional contract between the two parties, God and man. 20. However, no mediator is required when one party acts alone, and God acted alone when He dealt with Abraham.



CONTRACT. The entrance of the Law into Israel's history was a business deal. First, God made definite proposals to the people. Then they formally accepted His conditions, vowing, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). Thus it was a binding agreement between two parties. A will, on the other hand, is executed solely by its maker and designed to carry out his wishes alone. His heirs receive the benefits simply because he is pleased to bestow them. God's will (promise) freely pledged the Spirit to all exhibiting the faith of Abraham. However it didn't become effective until the death of Christ (Heb. 9:16). Paul says there is as much difference between the Law and God's (3 fold) promise as there is between a will and a contract. The Law, an entirely separate instrument, was executed long after God's promises were made and has no effect on them whatsoever.



MEDIATOR. God appeared to Abraham in Person (a theophany), making His promises directly. This is the way God likes to deal with people. But in giving the Law, which had to do with sin and punishment, He stayed in the background and worked through agents. Angels represented God and Moses represented man. That way the very giving of the Law dramatized the separation between God and man due to sin. God is not pleased to have mediators separating Him from His people. He prefers to bring them into immediate fellowship with Himself. But sin made it necessary, so Moses and the legal priesthood were used to keep man at a distance from God. The Gospel too has a Mediator (1st Tim. 2:5). Not one of separation, but of reconciliation. In Himself, Jesus represents both God and mankind, so that all parties can meet in Him. Yet, even His role as the Gospel Mediator is temporary, for when He has reconciled all things to God, He will vacate the Mediator's office (1 Cor. 15:24). Then we ourselves will be face to face with God, as He desires.

"Does that mean then that the Law and grace are hostile to each other?"

21. Is the Law then in any way contrary to the promises of God? Indeed not. For if there were some kind of a law which could impart life to men, then righteousness could most certainly be earned by keeping that law. 22. But as it is, Scripture says the whole world is imprisoned in sin, deserving the death penalty. Consequently the promise has to be a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ, given only to those putting their complete trust in Him.



CONTRARY. Are Law and grace opposites? Heaven forbid, says Paul, as though answering a Jewish Christian. But just suppose there could be a law which did give life. Then Law and grace would be competitors and hostile to each other, for each would offer a different way of salvation. They would then be like two gas stations offering different brands of gasoline. But this is not the case, for no law

can give life. Besides, the Mosaic Law didn't even pretend to give life. It's purpose was to make people yearn for the promise. It was given to enhance God's promise, to make it more desirable. The sicker a man is, the better the doctor looks to him. Similarly, the Law, by revealing man's need, makes the promises of God (justification and peace) even more appealing.



SCRIPTURE. About the time Moses received the Law, he began to write the Scriptures. The written Word set forth God's requirements which no man could fulfill. Therefore, like the Law, it also condemned him, serving as an indictment against him. Paul sees Scripture as a jailor assigned to detain all sinners in a prison camp to await execution. The name of the camp is LAW. The Scripture declares every man to be a sinner and under the death sentence, which is further proof, says Paul, that the Law is not a life-giver, but a prosecutor only. The Judaizers were believers in **Christ plus works**. Since the promise is only for those who place their complete trust in Jesus, the Judaizers are **excluded** from salvation. They did NOT have faith in Christ **ALONE**, but in their own works also.

"Just how is the Law related to Christianity?"

23. Until this kind of faith came, we were all kept in custody as wards of the Law. We had to await the faith that was later to be revealed. It was our only hope of deliverance.

24. Thus the Law was actually a guardian in charge of all of us until it was possible for us to receive justification by faith in Christ.



GUARDIAN. The Greek word is "pedagogue," a term for a worthy slave who exercised complete charge over the sons of Greek and Roman nobility. The boys were supervised constantly, led to and from school and assisted with their education. It was the guardians' task to break their rebellious spirits and curb their impetuosity. Responsible only to the father, the pedagogue was very strict, using the rod freely, so that often the lad's lot was no better than that

of a slave. The word of the guardian was law. This was Israel's position, she was held in custody by the Law which had three aspects: (1) **MORAL**: showing a man what he ought to be, but couldn't; (2) **CEREMONIAL**: showing that sin had to be put away by a sacrifice; (3) **JUDICIAL**: showing the doom sinners deserved. It was the Law's task to guide the growth of Israel until she could secure righteousness through faith in Christ personally.



WARDS. Paul has shown the Law to be a necessary preparation for the Gospel. Without it, there would have been no consciousness of sin and guilt. From Adam to Moses sin mushroomed in the world. It was not until the advent of the Law that man became fully conscious of his evil. It was like a police car appearing suddenly on the freeway. Everyone slows down. The Law did its job. It convinced men of their hopeless condition. Sadly though, Israel, instead of yearning for the grace promised to Abraham, began to trust in Law-keeping for righteousness. Even so, the Law remained in force until the coming of Christ. It served as a jailor with no authority to release anyone until Someone with higher authority (Christ) arrived to deliver the prisoners from its custody.

25. But now that Christ has come and we are able to exercise faith in Him, we are completely out from under the guardian's authority.



FAITH. Paul is not saying there was no faith in the O.T., nor is he speaking of a different kind of faith. There is no difference between O.T. faith and N.T. faith. O.T. faith is like a man wiring his house for electricity before the dam has been built to supply the power. N.T. faith is the same, except that the dam and power plant have been built. The difference is not in the faith, but in what it brings. Our faith today is no different from that of Abraham or any of the O.T. heroes, but we receive something they don't—Christ via the Spirit (Heb. 11:39, 40; 1st John 2:25). Thus, while Abraham had righteousness **IMPUTED** to him, we have righteousness **IMPARTED** to us. Why? We actually receive it when we receive Christ. Christ wasn't available until after Pentecost. The power plant wasn't turned on until Jesus arrived in the Spirit that day (Rom. 8:9).

26. All of you are God's sons through faith in Christ Jesus, 27. for all who are baptized into Christ, have clothed themselves with Him.



SONS. Paul further explains our freedom by saying it is the receiving of Christ (via the Spirit) that makes one a son of God (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15, 16). When Paul speaks of adulthood in these verses, he is NOT referring to N.T. maturity, but O.T. maturity. **They are not the same.** O.T. maturity is acquired the moment a Jew receives Christ and emerges from under the Law's dominion to function as a free son in Christ. N.T. maturity has to do with one's progress in the likeness of Christ. It is called, "Christian growth," and continues until a man dies. Israel came of age, as a nation, when Christ arrived in the world. Jews become of age individually when they receive Him, for they graduate from the Law that same second. The entire legal system ended with the availability of Christ. If Jewish Christians are out from under the Law, argues Paul, isn't it ridiculous to try and fasten its shackles on the Gentiles?



CLOTHED. Paul says those **IN CHRIST** are clothed with Him. Today, as the great Baptizer, the Lord is building His church by baptizing people into Himself. He said He would build it. This is how He does it (Matt. 16:18). Inasmuch as we are **IN** Him, we wear Him just as the Holy Spirit wears us (1 Cor. 6:19). And if we wear Christ, we are also clothed with His righteousness. "Clothed" refers to the Roman custom of placing the "toga virilus" on a youth the day he reached manhood. On his 21st birthday he assumed the dress of adulthood in a public ceremony. When we are saved, we put on Christ as our "toga virilus," showing we are no longer under a guardian, but on our own to follow Christ in an adult fashion. We are no longer regarded as spiritual minors. To add circumcision after one has put on Christ, would amount to free sons forfeiting their liberty and returning to slavery under the Law.

28. No longer then is there any advantage to such external distinctions as Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female — you are all one, equally accepted in Christ Jesus.

29. Since you belong to Christ, you are also Abraham's true descendants. The promised inheritance is yours!

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ONE IN CHRIST. Two great truths are expressed here: (1) no one is hindered from coming to Jesus because of his religious background, rank or sex; (2) those in Christ find such outward distinctions have nothing to do with how one is accepted by God. All true believers are regarded as **EQUAL** members of one family with Christ at the head. The Law, on the other hand, created such distinctions. Circumcision, for example, excluded females, but in Christ, water baptism (which answers to the rite of circumcision) is for all. Women participate equally with men. All the **NATURAL** distinctions vanish for the new life in Christ is **SPIRITUAL**. Indirectly Paul is asking, "What then can Judaism do for you? Do you wish to cover the glorious garment of Christ with the worn-out garments of Judaism?"



YOURS! Imagine a large circle. Label it "Christ, the Seed of Abraham." Now think of a tiny dot inside that circle. See this as yourself along with all others trusting Jesus as Savior (1 Cor. 12:13). All Christians are spiritually baptized into Christ to become "joint-heirs" with Him (Rom. 8:17). The entire unit (Christ and His own) receives the inheritance. Jesus was the literal Seed and true Heir of Abraham. The physical line of David ended with Him, for Jesus died without any human posterity. Yet He has **SPIRITUAL** posterity, for He is the **SIRE** of all who are **IN** Him. See how this spiritual parenthood cancels the Jew's claim to the inheritance because of physical descent from Abraham. The promise cannot be secured by physical birth, but by spiritual birth only. Paul has now proved the proposition he set forth in verse 7, i.e., those who are of faith are true sons of Abraham. You and I are the **spiritual seed** of Abraham because we are in Christ, the one true Heir.

"Why did so much time have to pass before Christianity arrived!"

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1. Consider an heir to a large estate. As long as he is a minor, he is no better off than a slave. Though he will be

the master of all in the day of his maturity, 2. he has to do what his guardians and trustees tell him until he reaches the age set by his father. 3. So it is with us. In those days when we were spiritual minors, we were slaves to the "ABCs" of religion in the world.



MINORS. Paul continues with the metaphor of an heir. He pictures a lad scheduled to receive a huge estate upon reaching the age of maturity specified by his father. However until that time arrives, he is in strict subjection to guardians and trustees and no better off than a slave. Prince Charles of England, though destined to become king, was fully subject to tutors and stewards in the days of his minority. Though the crown was as good as his, he was in strict bondage to those charged with preparing him for the day he would inherit the throne. Paul says all mankind was in a similar bondage under the requirements of primitive religion until it was time to receive its inheritance.



RELIGION. 20 centuries passed before the arrival of Abraham's Heir. Why so long? The world wasn't ready for Christianity, says Paul. It was not spiritually mature enough to receive its inheritance, the Holy Spirit. So, both Jews and Gentiles had to grow up in schools of religion. It was slavery. The Gentiles made gods with their own hands and slavishly served them. They sacrificed for sin, attempting to placate the wrath of their false deities. They lived under the threat of punishment. The Jews became slaves to the rituals and demands of revealed religion, which indeed dramatized the truth of God's coming sacrifice for sin. Both types of religion were somehow necessary in the historical development of mankind. The world had much to learn about sin before it would be ready for Jesus. In its spiritual infancy, all mankind had to be tutored by religious elements before Christ could come.

4. But when the minority period was over, God sent from within the depths of Himself, His own Son. He came into this world by means of human birth to a woman. Since she

was Jewish, He was a natural-born Jew and fully subject to the Law. 5. He came to redeem those who were under the Law and make it possible for all of us to shift from the status of slaves to the free position of the true sons of God.



OVER. It was necessary that sin be allowed to develop fully in the world, so man could face the impossibility of saving himself. Had Jesus come shortly after the fall of man, neither sin nor man's need of a Savior would have been fully realized. It took time to prepare the world for God's Son. The Roman Empire, the universal Greek language and culture, and the 1400 years of Hebrew drama of redemption by sacrifice, were all necessary preparations for the coming and spread of Christianity. Jew and Gentile alike contributed to the moral and spiritual expansion which made the world more capable of apprehending the Gospel than it would have been at an earlier age. The term, "fulness of time," corresponds to the world's maturity when she was ready to receive Abraham's Heir, Christ.



SON. Leaving the bosom of the Father, Jesus suffered a double humiliation: (1) entering the human stream by human birth to arrive as a newborn baby, (2) letting Himself become subject to the Jewish Law. This He did to free those trapped under the Law (as well as those in the worldly schools of religion, including the Galatians) by changing their status from minors to adults. Through faith in Him, they could be clothed with Him to receive instant adulthood. When a Roman lad reached 21 he was ceremoniously "adopted" as an adult. That is, he was formally declared to be an adult. We are the adopted sons of God in the Roman sense, for when we receive Christ we are accepted as adults. We are not adopted into God's family in the modern sense, for that would deny the truth of the new birth (John 3:3).



REDEEM. Adam is called the son of God (Luke 3:38). When God gave this world to Adam, it was an outright gift. It was his to enjoy. Then Adam fell, and the whole world, including all who would come after

him, passed over to Satan. It then became the devil's world. All of mankind became his subjects. If God wanted His people back, He would have to negotiate with Satan for their release. He would have to redeem or buy them back on Satan's terms, for Adam's surrender to Satan was legitimate. He was in no way deceived when he capitulated (1 Tim. 2:14). Satan's price for the release of man was the death of Jesus. Satan was clever. He knew that Jesus was the Deliverer. He was certain the death of the Deliverer would make his kingdom secure and he'd never have to give up his victims. But unknown to the devil, God ingeniously provided a way of escape from the satanic kingdom through the death of His Son. Had Satan known that Christ's death would release captives from his kingdom, he never would have engineered the cross (1 Cor. 2:8).

"Are we sons, then, in the same sense that Jesus was?"

6. As proof of your sonship, God has sent forth into our hearts the very same Spirit that is in His Son. Therefore we too cry "Abba! Father!" as He did. 7. No longer then are you slaves, dear brothers, but heirs, and by the grace of God entitled to everything bestowed on His sons.



SPIRIT. Literally it reads, "The Spirit of His Son," which is a unique reference to the Spirit of Christ. By this, Paul observes how the same Spirit which animated Jesus in the days of His flesh, now indwells us, causing us to regard God as our Father even as Jesus did. This shift in our feelings for God, i.e., from fear to family, is definite proof of the miracle of sonship. Before salvation a man is under bondage. A spirit of fear dominates his life (Rom. 8:15a). God is awesome to him. But once he receives the Spirit and is elevated to sonship, he feels at home in God's presence. He even addresses God as Jesus did, "Abba! Father!" (Mark 14:36). This is a mixture of Aramaic (Abba) and Greek (Pater) used in those times. It could also refer to the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ. "Abba Father," is warm, affectionate, indicating the tenderness of family intimacy.



YOUR-OUR. Paul employs an interchange of pronouns, i.e., "we-our-your," to show how the position of the Gentile Christians is equal to his or anyone born under the Law. He confirms their spiritual sonship by advancing as proof, something they can check for themselves—their feelings toward God. The Spirit's witness of sonship (and the resulting ease in God's presence) is evidence they are no longer minors, but mature sons and graduates of the pre-Christ schools of religion. Submitting to Jewish Law would thus be a return to slavery. They already have everything there is to have—in Christ. Slipping into Judaism would be a regression from adulthood to infancy. It is sad to hear believers agonizing for the Holy Spirit today, not realizing they already have Him dwelling within them (Rom. 8:9). The practice amounts to a denial of the fulness God has given us when we receive Christ via the Spirit (John 1:16; Col. 2:9). When we have Him, we have everything God has to offer (Eph. 1:3).

8. Back in your pagan days when you didn't know God at all, you were slaves to gods which in truth didn't exist. 9. But now that you have found God, or should I say, God has found you, how can you think of turning back once more to another powerless and worthless system of religion, even though that system is based on God's Law? Are you that desperate to become slaves all over again?



GODS. In the absence of any knowledge of the true God, men create gods of their own. The religious instinct (exploited by Satan) forces all men to worship something, whether they fashion it with their own hands, select it from nature, or project it from their imaginations. Consequently there is no way to find peace by means of them. Man therefore resorts to desperate, sometimes savage attempts to placate his false gods. Paul is staggered that his Galatians, knowing the awful bondage of their former religion would think to improve on their Christian sonship by embracing the former bondage of the Jewish Christians. Both systems were outward and employed forms appealing to the senses. Yet neither could bridge the gulf between God and

man, neither could provide peace. Both were, in fact, in awful bondage.



FOUND. No man can find God, He is not discoverable. A special work of the Spirit known as "pre-salvation illumination," is necessary before any man encounters God. The blinding power of Satan is such that no man can even consider the truth of God without outside help (2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus said no man could come to Him apart from God's drawing power (John 6:44). Thus the Galatians would never have found God had He not first found them. Now that they know Him, it is unthinkable, says Paul, that they could hope to improve on the relationship by going backwards to the empty routines of pre-Christian religions. In our time, the former gods are more likely to be family, fame, fortune, science or pleasure. Once we served them devotedly. Could we think to add to our wealth in Christ by returning to our former bondage?

"But this is exactly what the Galatians were doing, wasn't it?"

10. And now here you are scrupulously observing sabbath days, and sacred months and holy seasons and sabbatical years. 11. I am afraid you have me wondering whether or not all that hard labor I invested in you has been for nothing.



OBSERVING. As evidence of their returning to bondage, Paul speaks of their taking on the Jewish observances. They had yielded to the Judaizers and were beginning to observe the various holy days and seasons of the Jews. They were easing dangerously close to circumcision. It hurt Paul to think they would return to outward and formal worship with an eye to improving their status with God. He had worked so hard to bring them the simplicity of the Gospel. Their spiritual growth depended on their loyalty to what he had taught them. If they would prosper in Christ they must banish every vestige of legalism. Of course it was not the keeping of the days which was evil, but their reason for doing so, i.e., obtaining further merit in the sight of God. Modern Christians who observe certain days in the legal

sense lapse into bondage with the Galatians. Days can be wonderful as an aid to fellowship, but if special merit is attached to the keeping of them, they instantly become an evil in God's sight.

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"Is Paul warning them to cease this trend toward legalism?"

12. I beg you, my brothers, become as I am, free of Jewish customs. For I have become as you are, like a Gentile without the Law. Remember how you refused to wrong me when I first came to you, 13. even though it was because of a bodily illness that I first preached the Gospel to you? 14. How repulsive I must have appeared to you, yet you didn't despise me or turn away in disgust at the sight of my affliction which must have been an awful trial for you. To the contrary, you welcomed me as an angel of God, yes, even as Christ Jesus Himself!



ILLNESS. In appealing to the Galatians to abandon their passion for legalism, Paul reminds them he is now as free from the Law as if he had been born a Gentile. He begs them to give up this return to bondage, recalling their affection for him in the days when he first visited them. He had planned to go to Asia, but an attack of illness forced him to remain with the Galatians. The physical repugnance of his illness could have caused the Galatians to turn from him in disgust. We can't identify it, but the best guesses include malaria (common to Tarsus, his birthplace), epilepsy and a severe eye disorder. Perhaps it was a combination of all three. Regardless of his hideous appearance, he was not an object of scorn, for they accepted both him and his Savior with boundless enthusiasm.

15. What has happened to that beautiful bond between us, that gloriously happy spirit we enjoyed together when you were so pleased with me and the Gospel? I can honestly say

that you would have dug out your own eyes and given them to me if you could have. 16. Have I now become your enemy because I tell you the truth, just as I told it to you then?



EYES. On the basis of this passage some have explained Paul's illness as eye trouble, but it is open to question. More likely it was a current expression of sympathy based on the value of the eyes, a possession often prized next to one's life. In the days of his first visit, Paul had opened the eyes of their souls. They were so grateful they would have given the eyes of their bodies in return. Now he is asking: if you loved me so devotedly then and received the truth so joyously in spite of my deficiency (whatever it was), what has occurred that now makes me your enemy? Paul hasn't changed, neither has his message. The answer lies in the fickleness of their hearts as they gave heed to the false teachers. Paul points up their fickleness most eloquently with these verses.

17. I know how eagerly those false teachers are trying to win you over, but their intentions toward you are not honorable. All of their flattery is for an evil purpose. They would like to isolate you from the fellowship of believers and from me in particular, so that they can have you exclusively to themselves. Winning you feeds their pride. 18. Believe me, I am not the least bit jealous. There really is no harm in someone's trying to enlist your zeal for the truth, even though I am not there with you. However, these false teachers are out to hurt you, and I must oppose them.



JEALOUS. He may not sound like it here, but Paul is furious. It is the way of false teachers to come with flattering words. They are always friendly until they get a hold on you. The Judaizers didn't care anything about the Galatians, they simply wanted to win them as a matter of pride. Paul opposed them, not out of personal

jealousy (for then his motive would be evil), but because they sought to reduce his happy Galatians to bondage under the Law. To follow the false teachers would mean exchanging the freedom of the sons of God to become the slaves of Jewish customs. Modern Christians should ask cultists coming to their doors what that particular cult has to offer them they don't already enjoy in Christ. To follow them usually means forsaking something they already have in Jesus to acquire a form of bondage.

"Isn't that rather strong language for Paul to put into a letter!"

19. Oh, my little children, I am again in labor with you. Once more I suffer the pangs of an expectant mother in trying to bring you to the place where Christ is fully formed in you.
20. I wish I could be with you right now. Then I could make the tone of my words fit the situation. As it is, I am perplexed. I hardly know what to say to you.



FORMED. When Paul came to the Galatians the first time, God used him to DELIVER them from heathenism. Now all his good work is being threatened by Judaism. He complains of having to go through ANOTHER delivery process, this time to deliver them from the Judaizers. He is NOT speaking of deliverance for salvation, for the Galatians have already received the Spirit and the gifts were in operation to confirm (Gal. 3:5). It was a deliverance from legal bondage, for the Judaizers were trying to shape (form) the Galatians into slaves of the Law instead of the free sons of God. Paul knew that Christians cannot mature under the bondage of legalism, so now he must deliver them from the false teachers that they may continue in Christian liberty and mature after the likeness of Christ. Spiritual freedom is essential for Christian growth.



TONE. It is difficult to communicate emotions in a letter. Words are always interpreted by the feelings of the reader. However, the Galatians will feel some tenderness in the terms, "children," and "labor." Paul

will then move back to the attack quickly enough as he closes out the doctrinal portion of his letter with an allegory from the Jew's history, the story of Hagar and Sarah. It is strange that Paul does this, for nothing can be proved by an allegory. Such methods were common, however, in Paul's day. The Judaizers were used to arguing by allegory. Perhaps it is a subtle move on Paul's part, knowing the Judaizers would see this letter, to make them defend their position on Law versus grace in terms of an allegory. He may be using their own weapon (allegorical interpretations of the Law) to weaken their influence.

"Surely Paul doesn't hope to defend Christian freedom with an allegory!"

21. Tell me, you who are so eager to be under the Law, why don't you take note of what it really says? From this very Law, about which you are so concerned, it can be shown that it was never meant for you to be under the Law.

22. There you will find it written that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. The first was born to the slave woman, Hagar, and the other to Sarah, Abraham's freeborn wife.

23. These two sons were not begotten in the same way. The one born to the slave woman arrived in the ordinary way by natural generation, the son of the free woman was born by the power of God's promise.



SONS. Both Ishmael and Isaac were true sons of Abraham. However, they had different mothers and were born under different conditions. God had promised Abraham a son, but Sarah was past the age of child-bearing. Since she didn't see how the promised son could arrive any other way, she suggested that Abraham have a child by Hagar. Thus Hagar bore Abraham's firstborn son. But God kept His promise and Sarah herself miraculously conceived later to give birth to a freeborn son. By this, Abraham was taught to forget the ways of the flesh and live by faith

in the promises of God. This is what Paul would persuade the Galatians to do, if he can.

"How will Paul apply the fact of these two different births?"

24. Now this historical event can also be presented as an allegory, in which case these two women could represent two different covenants of God with man. Hagar the slave woman represents the old covenant, the Law, inasmuch as she is literally identified with the region of Mt. Sinai. Since she is a slave, that means all of her children are slaves as well. 25. With Hagar identified as Mt. Sinai, the very mountain in the Arabian desert where God gave the Law to Moses, she can stand for the earthly city of Jerusalem. Her children then are the Jerusalem Jews. Thus she and her children are in bondage, for all who try to please God by observing the ritual of the Law are slaves.



ALLEGORY. An allegory is not a type. It is a means of illustrating the truth set forth in a number of facts. Whereas there can only be one type, there can be numerous allegories (illustrations) made upon a single set of facts. The allegory is designed more for the imagination than reason. Thus Paul is not arguing Scripture here, but summing, by way of illustration, what he has said about bondage under the Law. Using the figure of two mothers, Paul shows how those under the Law and those born of the Spirit are two separate families, who have nothing in common with each other. The Judaizers, therefore, have nothing to offer the Galatians except slavery. Paul concludes his legal arguing by illustrating the foolishness of trading sonship in the free family of Sarah for bondage in the enslaved family of Hagar.



SINAI. Among the Arabs of the region, Mt. Sinai is called, "Mt. Hagar." That Paul is aware of this is perhaps a clue to the fact that he went there immediately after his salvation experience. With its rugged

rocks, and located far from the promised land, it is suited to represent the Law and the spirit of bondage. Hagar fled twice to this region, and from her, the people and the mountain took the name (Gen. 16 & 21). After declaring Hagar and the Law (Sinai) to be the same, Paul proceeds to call her the "city of Jerusalem." As always, the city of Jerusalem represents historic Israel. Since a slave woman can only produce slave children, Paul is hereby picturing all of Israel in slavery to the Law. As Ishmael was produced by the works of the flesh, so are those who would acquire divine sonship by the works of the flesh considered to be Hagar's children. Working to be saved by fleshly legal observances is the essence of Jewish bondage.

26. Inasmuch as Sarah, the free woman, gave birth to the free son of promise, she corresponds to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the free. She is our mother.



MOTHER. As Hagar is called the mother of all aspiring to divine sonship by the works of the Law, so Sarah is called the mother of all those born of the promised Holy Spirit. Representing the covenant of grace, Sarah is also called "Jerusalem," but a different Jerusalem from Hagar. Hagar is the earthly Jerusalem, while Sarah is the heavenly Jerusalem. Jesus said except a man be born "from above," he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Thus we have two separate families, one originating in the earth, the other in heaven. Paul's allegory has four contrasts:

Hagar, the slave woman	Sarah, the free woman
Ishmael, the child of flesh	Isaac, the child of promise
The old covenant, Law	the new covenant, grace
The earthly Jerusalem, etc.	The heavenly Jerusalem, etc.

"Can Paul relate such an allegory to other Scriptures?"

27. For it is written:

REJOICE BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR;

BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE
NOT IN LABOR;
FOR MORE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE
DESOLATE;
THAN OF THE ONE WHO LIVES WITH THE
HUSBAND.

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WRITTEN. Paul quotes from Isaiah's words to Israel during her exile in Babylon. The ancient prophet saw the restoration of Israel after having been stripped to nothing. Yet the language is not limited to her physical restoration, but sees beyond to the spiritual glory of Zion. Paul says it refers to the heavenly Jerusalem (portrayed by Sarah) as being barren during the time when Israel was wedded to God (covenant of Law) as played by Hagar. That corresponds to the time when Hagar had Abraham for her husband and bore him Ishmael. Sarah was then barren, having no relationship with her husband. But when God's promise was later fulfilled, she had Isaac (plus all those born of the promised Spirit). Thus Sarah, in a figure, ends up with more than Hagar, for her family includes all the Gentiles born of the Spirit.

28. So we, my brothers, like Isaac, are the children born by the power of God's promise.



POWER. The second birth of a man is a miracle. When he opens his heart to Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into him and in that split second he becomes a child of God. It is a supernatural event. The birth of a Christian is as supernatural as the birth of Isaac. This is the gist of Paul's words. He says those seeking life and justification under the Law are themselves the by-products of the Law. That is, they are the result of something outward and fleshly, the consequence of human works, like Ishmael. Christians, on the other hand, are the result of a promise. What promise? The promised Holy Spirit. Just as Isaac was promised to Abraham, so was the Holy Spirit promised to the nations through the ultimate Heir, the Lord Jesus. Since the Spirit was promised by God, all those born of that Spirit

are the children of that same promise. This is why Paul says, "We are the children born by the power of God's promise."

"Are these two families hostile to each other?"

29. As it was in the days when Ishmael, the natural-born son persecuted the son who was born by the power of the promise, so now do those slaving under the Jewish Law persecute those of us who are born of the Spirit.
30. But what does the Scripture say about that?

**GET RID OF THE SLAVE AND HER SON,
FOR THE SON OF THE SLAVE WOMAN
SHALL NOT SHARE IN THE INHERITANCE
OF THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN.**



INHERITANCE. Though Ishmael was Abraham's firstborn and legally entitled to the family name and estate, he was not the promised son, therefore not the heir God intended. When Isaac was born, he suffered persecution at the hands of Ishmael. (The modern Israel-Arab conflict is an extension of the original dispute.) As the first-born, Ishmael lorded it over his younger brother. He mocked his pious ways. One Jewish tradition says he even fired an arrow at him. The day came when Sarah had enough, and ordered Abraham to get rid of Ishmael. The patriarch complied, knowing he had gone against the plan of God in having the child in the first place. Thus Ishmael was cut off from the family, entitled to nothing. He and his mother were banished and given only bread and a bag of water. If the Galatians read Paul correctly, they will hear the Scriptures saying to them, kick out the Judaizers for they have no place with those born of the Holy Spirit.

31. So then, my brothers, we are not children of the slave woman. We are the children of the free woman!



FREE! There is triumph in Paul's words here. Too bad the Galatians couldn't hear these words from his lips. He is saying, Judaism and the Gospel cannot coexist. Thus he pronounces the death sentence on Judaism. This was a bold move, for many Jewish Christians were clinging tenaciously to the Mosaic Law. To have his Galatians submit to circumcision, which they were about to do, would mean turning from complete trust in Christ to place confidence in some outward acts of the flesh. They had already begun to observe certain days and weeks, etc., and were perilously close to forfeiting their freedom in the Lord. The fact of receiving the Spirit is proof they are of Sarah's family and should have no part with Hagar's sons of the Law. If they wish to keep their freedom, they will have to treat the Judaizers the same way Abraham treated Ishmael. He further warns if they do stand firm for Christ, they can expect persecution from the Judaizers, as did Isaac. Those standing firm for Christ today are also a persecuted minority. Fierce ecumenical (amalgamation) pressures are now being brought by liberal "Christians" against this tiny minority which is separated unto Christ alone (2 John 10).

"Then is Christ the only road to freedom?"

- 5** 1. Now that Christ has set you free, stay that way. Don't let yourselves be saddled again with the yoke of slavery.
2. Take my word for it, if you allow yourselves to be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. This is Paul speaking,
3. warning you once more, if anyone accepts circumcision he obligates himself to obey the entire Law.



NO VALUE. If Judaism is the way of salvation, then Christianity is not. Justification by faith and justification by works cannot coexist, for one centers in man and the other centers in Christ. A person must choose one or the other. Christ, therefore, benefits only those who rely on Him totally for their standing with God. Thus the Galatians are faced with salvation by Law (works) or salvation

by Christ (faith). The extent to which a man looks to any works for justification, to that same extent he moves his faith from Christ. Even the slightest trust in works is sufficient to keep a man from depositing his **complete** trust in the Lord. And without **total** trust there is no salvation. The Lord does not accept partial faith or divided loyalty. The Galatians had not as yet taken that step which would place them under the Law, but they were close to it. Hence Paul's warning. They were on the verge of shifting their loyalty from Christ.



WARNING. As Gentiles who previously served heathen gods, they knew the meaning of religious bondage. Paul warns they are about to go back into that same old slavery if they embrace the Jewish system for obtaining righteousness. The door into that system was the rite of circumcision. The act itself is harmless, but to the Galatians it was presented as a condition for salvation. The Judaizers no doubt concealed the fact that once a man entered Judaism (via circumcision) he became a full participant in the covenant of the Law, obligated to perform the entire Law flawlessly. Modern cults use the same technique for luring unsuspecting victims into their web one step at a time. The Galatians may have thought they were embracing only one point of the Law, when in fact, they were embracing the whole Jewish system. That is the hidden treachery. The man who boards a plane commits himself to go to its destination. Paul has already shown how breaking the Law at one point makes one guilty of it all (3:10).

"What kind of a relationship with Christ do the Judaizers have?"

4. You who are looking to the Law to save you are cut off from Christ. By placing yourselves under the Law, you have fallen from God's grace. 5. We, on the other hand, who have received God's Spirit by faith, wait for the day when we will be revealed in His righteousness.



YOU-WE. Paul's words are aimed at the Judaizers who sought to convince the Galatians that legalism and grace could be mixed to provide a more perfect salvation. But Paul says the two are mutually exclusive and cannot be mixed. Those seeking justification by rituals and legalism are as far from salvation through faith in Christ as Hagar was from Abraham's family and the promised inheritance. She was cut off and so are the Judaizers. Paul then cites the attitude of the true believer as proof of this claim. Those owning the Spirit's witness, he says, have the assurance they will one day be revealed in Christ's righteousness. All true believers have the Spirit. The Spirit, Himself, is the guarantee the event will take place (Eph. 1:14). The Judaizers, by refusing to come to Him by faith alone, deprive themselves (fallen) of unspeakable resources and riches in Christ.



FALLEN. To understand this correctly, it is necessary to distinguish between those who sought salvation through Christ PLUS keeping the Law (the Judaizers), and those ALREADY SAVED, but in danger of being entangled in Jewish legalism (the Galatian Christians). This verse is NOT teaching that a born-again Christian can lose his salvation by accepting circumcision and submitting to the Jewish code. Why? The grace of God brings MORE than salvation to a person. It also brings him the "glorious liberty of the sons of God." The believer who voluntarily places himself under the legal yoke, does NOT forfeit his sonship, but he does FALL from the higher estate which his salvation brought him—FREEDOM. Whereas Christian sonship is NOT negotiable, Christian liberty can be traded for legalism anytime. The Christian who falls from grace (freedom) not only abandons his precious liberty, he also forsakes the privilege of growing in Christ. Legalism stifles Christian growth.

6. For those of us who are actually in Christ, circumcision means nothing, neither does the lack of it. What matters is that our faith is translated into action because the Lord loves us and we love Him.



MATTERS. Can rules and rituals for being saved mean anything to the man who is already in Christ and knows it? That would be like telling a race driver how to drive a car. Similarly, the Judaizers' ideas for salvation are meaningless to those already experiencing the fantastic love of Jesus in their hearts. The man whose soul has been swept clean of sin's guilt, has no interest in how he might obtain forgiveness. The presence of the Lord within him is his new obsession and from there, he presses on to the higher business of exalting his Lord and serving Him. Loving Jesus, he discounts this world and its attractions to live for the Lord he cannot see. He does so by faith, prompted by the assurance that anyone Who loved him enough to die for him could never fail him in any way.

"Does Paul plan to point out the deadliness of the Judaizers and their teachings?"

7. You were making such good progress! Who is it that has gotten you off the track and shifted you from obedience to the truth?
8. Certainly it wasn't the God who calls you to obedience to the Gospel, for He doesn't use that kind of persuasion. 9. Take care, you know how a little bit of yeast can permeate and affect a whole batch of dough.



PERSUASION. When Paul asks who shifted them from obedience to the truth, the question is rhetorical. The answer is obvious—the Judaizers. The poor Galatians, who had everything to lose and nothing to gain from following the false teachers, were allowing themselves to be forced off the track of truth. They were running well in the Christian race when certain evil ones drew alongside and began easing them off the Gospel course. (Paul is thinking of what sometimes happened in the Greek games.) It is done so subtly it doesn't occur to them to resist. The Judaizers, using the "yeast-method" of persuasion, i.e., introducing a wee bit of legalism knowing it will take over in time, deceived the Galatians into thinking a little legalism would add to their standing in Christ. Now that Paul has exposed the danger and

sounded the warning, they must flee from these men. There is still time for the Galatians to turn back to the truth.



YEAST. Leaven in the lump was a proverb of Paul's day to indicate the spread of evil and error. A little legalism (yeast) when mixed into the pure gospel (lump) spreads rapidly to corrupt the truth. Unsuspecting believers, who embrace a bit of legalism, are soon trapped in a legal system for it has a way of growing and taking over. Certainly God does not use such a method. He calls, He doesn't deceive. That leaves but one author—Satan. While Paul doesn't name the devil, his reasoning is clear. In Jesus' day the Pharisees and Sadducees used this method. In Paul's day the Judaizers used it. And now in our time, the cultists. Modern Christians must be alert to the penetrating power of legal leaven. It will not mix with the Gospel. Give a wide berth to those who add sabbath-keeping, water-baptism, any ritual or human act to the doctrine of salvation. The error is deadly.

10. With confidence in the Lord's ability to give you the right mind in these things, I'm sure you won't take the fatal step and submit to circumcision. I trust Him to return you to the true course so that you will again feel as I do about the Gospel. As for the one who is unsettling your faith, whoever he is, he will have to answer for it in that day.



CONFIDENCE. Paul is confident of two things: (1) that the Galatians will not fall, i.e., abandon their position in free grace (liberty, not sonship) to go headlong into slavery, and (2) the deceivers will be dealt with severely by God in the Judgment. Note how gentle he is with his Galatians, yet severely pronouncing judgment on the deceivers in the same breath. Paul does not mean to single out a particular Judaizer, but it is probable that the invaders had a leader who should indeed bear the greatest blame. Teachers today ought to be tender with the lambs who are being deceived, but they shouldn't hesitate to denounce strongly those who poison God's people against the Gospel

of grace. In these days of ecumenicity, there is the danger of being tolerant of that which is false and dangerous.

"Didn't the Judaizers charge that Paul sometimes advocated circumcision?"

11. If it is true brethren, as some allege, that I myself sometimes preach the need of circumcision for salvation, why then am I still being persecuted? If I really did advocate such a thing, then the message of the cross would no longer be offensive. The truth is, I am being persecuted because I preach salvation through faith in Christ alone. 12. And as for these agitators who are trying to overthrow your faith, I wish they would go all the way with their knives and castrate themselves!



PERSECUTED. The Judaizers charged that Paul himself advocated circumcision whenever it was convenient for him to do so. They could cite Timothy as an example. He was a Galatian Paul had already circumcised. Even so, Paul does not defend himself by explaining why Timothy was circumcised. Instead he asks: Why am I still being persecuted if I'm an advocate of circumcision? In that case he would have been preaching what the Judaizers wanted to hear, i.e., that the Mosaic Law was binding on Christians. The cross **WITH** circumcision was no offense to the Jews. What they hated was the cross **INSTEAD** of circumcision. The fact that men must trust in the crucified Christ **alone** is the sting of the Gospel. How happy some would be if the Gospel made room for one's own works in salvation, i.e., water-baptism, sabbath-keeping, witnessing, church membership, speaking in tongues, etc.



CASTRATE. The Greek reads: "Would cut themselves off." This is some of the harshest language Paul has used. He is saying: I wish the Judaizers would do a thorough job and go beyond mere circumcision to castrate themselves. This was a recognized form of heathen

worship familiar to the Galatians. Pessinus, one of their chief towns, was home of the worship of Cybele, in whose honor these mutilations were often practiced. The Judaizers would profit more from this excision than circumcision. Such an action would exclude them from the Jewish congregation, bringing the pain of the Law (Deut. 23:1). Thus they would be ashamed of enforcing it on anyone else. In such a strait they would be glad for the liberty of the Gospel, eager to become sound members of the body of Christ by faith alone.

"If the Galatians are free, can't they use their freedom any way they please!"

13. Now my brothers, since you have been called to freedom, take care that you do not turn your liberty to license and serve the old nature, for then you will be enslaved in the lusts of your own flesh. Instead, let love make you the slaves of one another, 14. for the whole Law is satisfied by this one concept:

"LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF!"



LIBERTY. In Romans and 1st Corinthians Paul shows how easily Christians can be tempted to use forgiveness as a basis for self-indulgence. The goal of grace is not freedom to sin, but freedom from sin. However, grace does not overrule our freedom of choice. A Christian set free from the Law of sin and death, has the power to live a godly life, but there is no guarantee he will. If he allows evil to get a foothold, he can still be enslaved to sin, simply because he has the liberty to do so. There is no hint anywhere that Christ's death is meant to be a cloak for indulging the flesh or license for breaking the Law. We have been saved from the death of the Law to live for God—not ourselves. While God justifies us by faith, we are to justify His action in saving us by the way we live for Him.



LOVE. Love can enslave a person as surely as can evil. The man motivated by evil is a slave to sin, while the one motivated by love is a slave to others. Consider the boy who spends his last dime on his girl, or

the mother who goes without to provide the best for her children. The Christian who loves others, finds himself doing from the heart what the Law once commanded him to do. Now he does it because he **WANTS TO**, whereas before he was **COMMANDED TO**. Paul says, don't use your freedom for evil purposes for you will become slaves to sin. Choose love instead, and become the slaves of each other. When you do, you fulfill the whole Law. Surely it is better to fulfill the Law out of internal desire, than trying to fulfill it by taking heed to the external, legal suggestions of the Judaizers.

15. But if you choose to act like animals, backbiting and attacking one another instead of loving each other, take care that you don't end up destroying each other. Such strife is fatal to Christian fellowship.



BACKBITING. Nothing is more deadly to a fellowship of Christians than taking sides against one another over doctrinal issues. The Judaizers were apparently successful in causing a division among the Galatians. Their love for the Law was so totally at odds with the law of love that bickering resulted. Paul uses the metaphor of animals snarling and snapping at each other to picture those feelings which rise during church quarrels. He warns that the final destruction of their fellowship is possible if they continue to use their freedom for partisan fighting. As a little vinegar can curdle a whole glass of pure cream, so can a little bickering utterly destroy the unity and peace between brethren. This is a terrible misuse of Christian liberty, says Paul. Besides, all their resources for growth and spreading of the Gospel are consumed in their fussing.

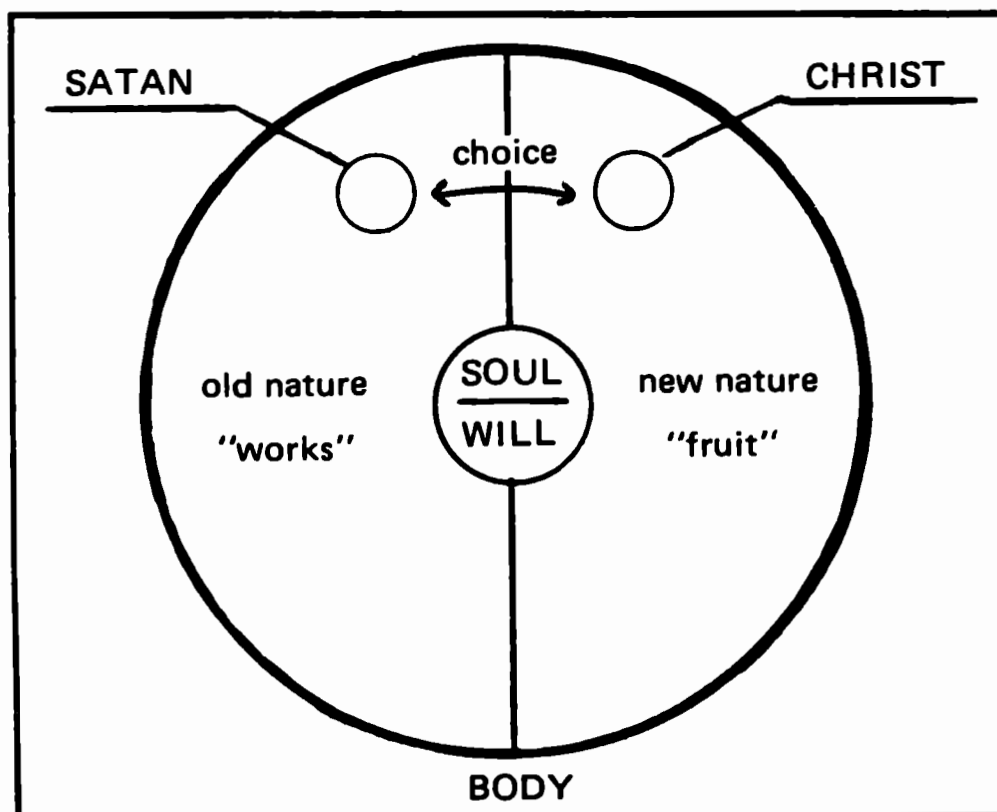
"What then is expected of people who enjoy Christian freedom!"

16. Let me put it this way: if you will let the Spirit lead you in everything you do and think, you will not find yourselves obeying the impulses of your old nature. 17. What the old nature impels you to do, you see, is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants you to do.

These two forces operating inside you are hostile to each other, with each seeking to dominate your life. Consequently there is never a time when you are not resisted by one or the other, no matter what it is you want to do. If you want to do good, it will be opposed by your flesh. If you want to do evil, it will be opposed by the Spirit.



SPIRIT-FLESH. These verses present the truth of the Christian's two natures and the struggle between them. It is a supreme truth of the N.T., picturing the warfare which does not end until the believer sheds his body at death. The source of all desire to do evil resides in the flesh. It is animated of course, by Satan, the unholy spirit. The yearning to do the will of God resides in the new nature (the new creation—2 Cor. 5:17) as animated by the Holy Spirit. These two gods (Holy Spirit and Satan) compete for our wills. Because of the mutual conflict between them, no matter what we would do, the other god opposes it. A decision to obey the new nature (the Spirit's leading) is resisted by the old nature and vice versa.





DOMINATE. Note how we are told to let the Spirit lead us, which implies we have the power to refuse. We thus discover the real meaning of Christian freedom—the privilege of choosing which nature (and the god behind it) will be our master in any given situation. Before salvation we didn't have such a choice. We could only choose between varying degrees of the old nature. The new nature supplied by the new birth makes possible another choice. Christian freedom then, is more precisely defined as the liberty to choose which nature will dominate our lives. Christians, entertaining the delusion that their old natures are dead, become easy victims for Satan. Such a notion can bring despair to a convert who finds himself sinning. Older Christians embracing this error often imagine they cannot sin and give ridiculous names to those practices which the Word of God clearly calls sin.



LEAD. It is vital to note the difference between having the Spirit and being led by the Spirit. All Christians have the Spirit (Rom. 8:9a), yet not all are led by Him. It is one thing to LIVE in the Spirit (salvation), quite another to be LED by the Spirit (sanctification). The receiving of the Spirit is but the beginning of an exciting new life. Who cannot recall the thrill of sins forgiven? The Spirit-led life is even more exciting. Laying hold of our boundless resources in the Spirit is a new adventure. Let a Christian discover the Spirit's PRESENCE and POWER at work within him and he will be transformed by a new obsession. Sadly though, few Christians know that joy today. Free from the Law of sin and death, they could have such a life if they wanted it. Instead they retain the control of their lives in their own hands to live after the flesh, forfeiting the grand treat of walking in the Spirit.

18. As long as you obey the leading of the Spirit, you are no longer subject to the Mosaic Law.



SUBJECT. Earlier Paul had said: If you let the Spirit control you, you will not be subject to the impulses of the flesh. Here he says the Spirit-led man is not subject to the Law. And that's true so long as he is surrendered to the Spirit. The moment he yields to the old

nature, he will do the works of the flesh which are subject to the Mosaic Law. The believer with his two natures is akin to an airplane in flight obeying the law of aerodynamics. So long as it obeys the higher law, it is beyond the lower law of gravity. But the instant that plane ceases to function by the higher law, the lower one takes over. The moment a Christian is not Spirit-led, he will obey his fleshly impulses and become subject to the Mosaic Law, for it was given to judge the acts of the flesh. For a man to be totally free of legal violations, he would have to be Spirit-led 100% of the time. The Christian, however, is totally free of the penalty of the Law. Jesus bore that Himself.

"How does one distinguish between his two natures?"

19. The works of the flesh are obvious. First there are sex sins as expressed in immoral, filthy and indecent acts. 20. Then there are the religious sins of idolatry and witchcraft. Thirdly there are social sins as expressed in hostilities and revelry. When people become jealous of each other and fight and divide over doctrines, for example, you know they are motivated by selfishness and ambition. It climaxes when they separate into groups.



OBVIOUS. Having spoken of the continual war between the two natures, Paul speaks next of what each produces in the Christian. To show how they are not even in the same category, he calls one the **works** of the flesh, the other the **fruit** of the Spirit. The difference between them is not in degree only, but also in **KIND**. While Paul uses the term "flesh," he does not mean that a person's body sins. A man's body never sins. Only the person inside the body sins. All actions, whether evil or righteous are first conceived in the mind and then executed by the body. A Christian's body is a stage upon which his two natures perform. Paul uses the words "flesh" and "old nature" interchangeably. He lists the works of the flesh here to show how utterly foreign they are to the fruit of the Spirit, thus providing a means for judging between the two natures.



SINS. The works of the flesh could just as easily be called the fruit of the unholy spirit. Satan works through the old nature, inspiring a Christian to do evil as surely as the Holy Spirit works through the new nature prompting him to be like Christ. To whichever spirit the Christian submits, the corresponding nature will be revealed. Paul has mentioned sins committed against ourselves, against God, and against our neighbors showing how all flow from a nature totally devoid of holiness. Apparently the Galatian Christians were guilty on all three counts, for the apostle finds it necessary to repeat a warning delivered earlier. Though they are born again, they have been using their Christian liberty to serve the old nature and these works of the flesh resulted.

21. Finally there is drunkenness and carousing and things of that sort. I warn you now as I have before, those who do such things will never inherit the kingdom of God.



INHERIT. As we scan the works of the flesh, we realize we all do some of these things in varying degrees. One might then conclude, "Since I do some of these things am I excluded from heaven?" No. Which nature does them? The old. Indeed the corrupted nature cannot enter heaven. Our true (spiritual) circumcision in Christ removes the old nature from the soul so that it passes away with the flesh at physical death (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11). The "old man" cannot enter heaven. Only the new man does. The Christian, clothed with his new nature, inherits the kingdom. The unsaved man dies with his old nature still attached to enter eternity a child of Satan forever (John 8:24). Paul's words could be translated, the old nature does not inherit the kingdom of God.

22. On the other hand, the Spirit-led life yields this fruit in one's life: inwardly he experiences love, joy and peace. Toward others he manifests patience, kindness and goodness, while toward God he demonstrates faithfulness, 23. meekness and personal restraint of his stronger passions. No law is able to regulate these things.



FRUIT. When a man surrenders to the Spirit, Christ's nature is displayed in his walk. This is because the Holy Spirit animates his personality and behavior. In those moments when a Christian is totally submissive to the Spirit, he is Spirit-filled. Were such a man fully surrendered 100% of the time, his conduct and attitudes would resemble that of the Lord, though not to the same degree. Why? We must distinguish between surrender to the Spirit (Spirit-filled) and maturity (personality growth), for even Spirit-filled Christians must continue to grow. Some saints have more to surrender for the Spirit's use than do others, just as some have more to surrender to the unholy spirit than do others. Both spirits produce their fruit in the Christian's life insofar as they are permitted to do so, for neither dominates the Christian's will.



NO LAW. The Jewish Law was a reflection of God's own nature. It was the outward standard men had to match if they would make themselves holy by their own works. Of course no one but Jesus could do that. Since it was an EXTERNAL LAW, it gave no INTERNAL help for obeying it. It sought to regulate human behavior from the OUTSIDE. The Christian, on the other hand, has a new nature which is God's Law written on his heart (INSIDE him), plus the power of the indwelling Spirit to manifest this new nature whenever he chooses. The moment he submits to the Spirit to reveal the new nature, he is fulfilling the Law, for it is actually God's nature that is being revealed in him. Since it is God the Spirit Who does this work in the believer, there is no Law to regulate the results. Who is worthy to measure the behavior of God?

"Does salvation automatically produce a Spirit-led life?"

24. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the old nature with all of its passions and impulses. 25. Since we now have life in the Spirit we are responsible to lead a Spirit-led life. 26. That being the case, let's not become proud, indulging our ambitions in the vain desire to be somebody, for that only

creates jealousy and makes for hard feelings among the brethren.



CRUCIFIED. When we receive Christ, we receive His death. As surely as we now live beyond the realm of the Law, we also live beyond the flesh. Our existence has been shifted from the flesh to the spirit (Col. 1:13). We actually "sit in the heavenlies" in Christ (Eph. 2:6). As far as eternity is concerned, both our bodies and old natures are dead, for neither enters heaven. When death strikes, we leave both behind to be with Christ in the spirit (2 Cor. 5:8). Since we now have an existence which is totally apart from sin, Paul insists there is no reason to obey the flesh any longer. When we do, we produce dead works for they flow from a nature God regards as dead. He'd like us to adopt this view of the old nature (Rom. 6:11).



SPIRIT-LED. We not only receive the death of Christ, we receive His life as well. Since we now have the resurrection life, Paul asks us to live as though our bodies had died and we were on the other side of physical death—possessing only the new nature. He says the Spirit is eager to give this kind of deliverance if we will let Him. Therefore Paul feels justified in asking us to forsake the promptings of the flesh and submit totally to the Spirit. In another place he commands it, saying: "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). The fact that he commands it, shows it is NOT automatic. God can give us the Spirit, but He cannot give us a Spirit-regulated life and make us free at the same time. We must live the Spirit-filled life for ourselves. It's a matter of possessing our possessions. As the Israelites had to take the land of Palestine after God had given it to them, so does the Christian have to struggle to live a Spirit-led life.



NOT BECOME. Citing pride as an example, Paul asks the Galatians not to become proud. If they will surrender to the Spirit instead of their old natures, the very desire to be proud will be slain in that moment. It will stay crucified so long as they maintain the surrender. Thus the crucified life is not a one-time experience, but a walk which must be constantly maintained. That's not easy. Why? There is one who continually stirs the flesh, so that it wars against the spirit to prevent such a surrender (Vs. 17).

Therefore the believer must also deal with Satan. To attain to the crucified life then, a Christian must do two things: (1) resist the devil (at home in the old nature), and (2) practice the presence of Christ (dwelling in the new nature). One is a fight, the other a fellowship. Before there can be any real surrender for the crucified life, the believer must deal directly with the one who has the power to keep him from it. The Christian warfare is real. Many who long for the crucified life have yet to start fighting. The fight comes first, for victory itself means to triumph in battle.

"How should such spirituality express itself, practically?"

6 1. Brethren, should you see a fellow Christian overcome by an impulsive sin, those of you leading more Spirit-led lives should help him extricate himself from the evil and get back on the right path. But see that you do it meekly, for in the process of restoring him, you could easily be overcome by the sin of pride yourselves.



RESTORING. Having said the Spirit-led life brings about deep changes within a person, Paul moves to give examples of what he means. He cites 3 specifics which ought to be found in spiritual Christians: (1) restoring an erring brother (vs. 1), (2) assisting those in unfortunate circumstances (vs. 2), (3) investing one's resources in the Lord's work (vs. 6). The risk in counseling an erring brother is that one can proudly assume himself above such things, when in fact, he may be the next in line to fall. Instead of handling the errant brother as tenderly as a dislocated joint, the proud Christian is pharisaical and censorious, assuming his own life to be the standard for judgment. The Lord washed the disciples' feet to show how far we should go in humbling ourselves before each other.



EXTRICATE. Can one Christian extricate another from evil? Not really. A man must extricate himself. Yet, a brother can assist. How? By approaching the errant one in a way that makes it easy for him to confess

his fault. It cannot be done by putting your finger on his sin. When you show that you consider yourself even lower than he is, he is not threatened by you (Phil. 2:3). This makes it easy for him to share his problem with you. Once he confesses his sin and you pray together, James' healing formula is invoked (Ja. 5:16). After that, if you show him HOW to resist the devil, you give him the practical tool for overcoming the evil (Ja. 4:7).

2. If you help each other bear those burdens which life imposes on men, you will fulfill the Law of Christ. 3. But if anyone thinks he is too spiritual to minister to the needs of a weaker or afflicted brother, he is deceiving himself. He is not spiritual at all. Humbling one's self to share the burdens of others is an indication of great spirituality.



BURDENS. If it's law you want, says Paul, don't serve the Jewish Law, as the Judaizers advocate, but submit to the Law of Christ. Instead of shouldering the burden of legalism, get under each other's burdens and fulfill the Law of love. That, in itself, sums the whole Jewish Law. Paul doesn't mean for his counsel on burden-sharing to be limited to moral burdens only, as per the man trapped in a sin, but also those burdens caused by shifting circumstances, i.e., sickness and misfortune. The one who thinks himself too spiritual to assist a brother in trouble or in need, is deceived. Blinded by conceit, he may claim to be Spirit-filled, but he isn't, for the Spirit moves godly men to help each other. God's estimate of spirituality has more to do with the way one pays his bills, speaks to his wife, raises his children and serves his employer than with a stand on doctrinal issues or emotional experiences.

"Can a man measure his own spirituality!"

4. However, everyone should learn to evaluate his own service to the Lord. Then if he congratulates himself, it will be because he has

found something worthy of praise within himself, and not because he evaluates his service by measuring himself against others. 5. You see, there is a load we must each bear alone, there are responsibilities with which no one can help us.



EVALUATE. Christians have two responsibilities they cannot pass to anyone else. Each is fully accountable for: (1) how he matures in the likeness of Christ (development as a person), (2) how faithfully he obeys the Lord's commands (his record of works). In the Judgment, no Christian will be measured against another, each will stand alone to give an account of himself. He will be rated on the basis of what **he did** with his abilities and opportunities as compared with what **he could have done**. Thus he is rated against himself. Since this is the way God measures a man, one should also evaluate himself that way. Paul recommends self-examination as an antidote to pride. Self-comparison can make a man feel he has enough to do caring for his own failures without boastfully comparing himself with his neighbor.

6. And then make sure that he who is taught in the Word of God shares in all good things with his teacher.



SHARES. Paul's 3rd example of the changed life has to do with the investment of one's worldly goods. It is somewhat different today, but in Paul's time the prime opportunity for investing in the Gospel was by supporting the teacher. Actually it was a sharing ("communicating") for while the teacher gave of the good things of the Word, the student gave of the good things of life in exchange, i.e., food, clothing and shelter. Today, of course, money is used as the medium of exchange. Paul was careful to speak of the grace of giving and receiving, for he knew it as God's provision for maintaining the Gospel in the world (Phil. 4:15). Modern Christians have many places to invest their money, whether in Christian literature and radio, Bible schools or in missions. Note how Paul considers investing in Christ a test of spirituality. The dedication of one's money

should follow the dedication of his life to Jesus—if his dedication is truly genuine.

"Is the stewardship of our lives really that vital?"

7. Make no mistake about it, no one can sneer at God's Laws and get away with it. A man always harvests from the same field in which he sows. 8. If he plants seed in his old nature (flesh), he will harvest a crop which ends in destruction. If he plants seed in his new nature (Spirit), the Holy Spirit will give him a harvest he can enjoy forever.



HARVEST. Not only is it true that a man can only get back what he sows, he must get it from the same field in which he sows. Yet many Christians believe they can sow to the flesh, i.e., live to suit themselves in this life and still reap a joyous harvest for heaven. It just won't work. God's Law will not bend to the whims of men. Those investing their lives in earthly things such as fame, families and fortune, will reap a harvest that is useless in eternity. Even worse, they will watch it go up in smoke at the Judgment (1 Cor. 3:15). The man who sows to the Spirit, (his new nature), investing himself in others in Jesus' Name, will reap a crop in heaven which he may enjoy forever. A man's two natures are like two fields. The crops are being sown in this life, to be reaped at death.



SEED. One watermelon seed can produce an entire vine, so there is also the law of increase as well as the law of the harvest. The Christian who invests his substance in Christ, sows to the Spirit and the law of increase (30, 60 and 100 fold) guarantees he will reap bountifully in heaven (Matt. 19:29; 13:23). If he fails to invest in Christ, sowing to the flesh instead, he starts to reap even in this life the consequences of evil. The Christian who wants "things" for his family, for example, is soon trapped in a passion for money that won't let him go. He may accumulate possessions, but none will be of any use to him in eternity, and he will have forfeited his one chance to plant

a crop for heaven. Though these verses are often given a wider context by some commentators, Paul is clearly speaking of the stewardship of one's finances.

9. So don't weary of being generous. For unless you throw in the towel, you are certain to reap the harvest that follows the sowing of good works. 10. Consequently, we should be generous with everyone while we have the opportunity, but most particularly with those who belong to the family of faith.

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WEARY. See how in this verse we are to **DO** good, not just **FEEL** good as we serve Christ. Feeling has nothing to do with it. The faith-life is not for sissies or those who serve when they feel like it. God wants soldiers who refuse to give up when tired or the way is rough. A man can get tired **IN** the Lord's service, but woe to the one who gets tired **OF** it. Believers today appear content to give the Lord a few hours a week, when in fact they owe Him their entire lives. And as for financial support, He usually receives less than a waiter's tip. Paul asks God's people to **sacrifice** themselves, knowing the harvest in heaven will be that much greater. The more laborious the sowing, the bigger the crop one will enjoy in eternity.



GENEROUS. The man who walks in the Spirit, acts like the Spirit. We are made in the image of a generous God. He is a Giver, not a getter. Like our heavenly Father, "Who maketh His rain to fall on the just and unjust," the Spirit-led Christian responds to all who need his help and kindness. He acts like God. Yet, it is also true that a man is under a greater obligation to the ones to whom he is most closely bound—as with a husband to his wife or parents to their children. The greater the bond, the greater the obligation. Our greatest bond is with the Lord Jesus, yet within that same bond, is our union with all others who are truly born again. Therefore the family of faith has the first claim on our generosity and particularly those with whom we are the most closely associated. Even though Christians are obligated to prefer one another, they can do so without prejudice to the general law of "Love thy neighbor."



OPPORTUNITY. A man has but one life to invest in Christ. He will be through planting at death. There will be no planting in heaven. Those expecting a harvest in heaven merely because they are saved, will be shocked at what awaits them. They will be forever destitute because they did not sow to the Spirit while they had a chance. "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven," is the Lord's invitation (Matt. 6:20). If a person fails to do so, he will arrive there flat broke. No one else can do this for him. Paul urges Christians to capitalize on Jesus' offer of 100 fold return (10,000%), by being generous with their time and money when it comes to pastors and the saints, or others for that matter (Matt. 19:29). Many will regret the waste of sowing to the flesh, when they see how they forfeited their sole opportunity to invest in the Spirit.

"Now that he has brought his counsel to the Galatians, how will he close his letter?"

11. Please note the size of these letters with which I make my closing words. You can tell I am writing them in my own hand.



SIZE. The last eight verses of this letter were apparently written in Paul's own hand and in large letters to give them special importance. He wishes to close by emphasizing the main point of his letter, i.e., that the way of the Judaizers is contrary to the way of the cross. It is as if he were saying, "What I am about to say now is so vital, I write it myself rather than have my secretary do it." The Galatians knew it was painfully difficult to write on a papyrus roll. They will recognize his handwriting and feel his deep concern which stands in contrast to the motives of the Judaizers who sought only to exploit them. Thus, it is not the size of the letters he is stressing, but the fact that he has written them himself. By this device special attention is drawn to his closing words.

12. Just who are these men who insist on your being circumcised? I'll tell you who they are. They are people who dread being perse-

cuted for the cross of Christ and hope to avoid it by making a great show of the externals of the Jewish religion. They are afraid to have it known that salvation is through faith in the crucified Messiah only. 13. Note how those who adopt circumcision, don't even obey the Jewish Law themselves, yet they want you circumcised and added to their number in order to make it appear they are right in their position.



AVOID. Putting physical safety ahead of spiritual safety, the Judaizers refused to acknowledge salvation was in Christ alone. They feared the wrath of the great masses of Jews who shunned the Lord. Thus they developed a corrupted "Christianity" which merely **added** Christ to Judaism. They recognized Jesus as Messiah, but were not willing to pay the price involved in trading Judaism for Christ. Salvation, to them, was a matter of Christ plus circumcision (the Law). To make their program appear as "official" Christianity, they had to do away with Paul's program which presented Christ **INSTEAD** of Judaism. They sought to do this by winning over all of his converts to circumcision and the Law. Were they successful, "Christianity" would be reduced to a Jewish sect, and those involved would escape all persecution from the other Jews. But Paul puts the lie to their scheme by observing how these Judaizers themselves do not keep the Law. Consequently they have neither salvation nor any standing under the Law.

14. As for me, God forbid that I should boast in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For by His cross the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.



CROSS. Whereas the Judaizers gloried in circumcision (because it enabled them to acknowledge Christ yet escape the stigma of His cross), Paul gloried in the cross. He counted it an honor to bear the stigma of Christ. Humanly, he enjoyed rank among the Jews, was

likely the best educated man of his day, and bore the title of apostle. But all these he regarded as mere toys of the earth compared to the towering majesty of the cross. The cross was the dividing point of his life. Not only is time divided into B.C. and A.D., but so is the Christian. The cross, like a huge surgical knife, slices a man's life into two parts: that which is yet a part of the world (old nature) and that which lives in the Spirit (new nature). Calvary is the great spiritual watershed of one's life.



CRUCIFIED. Parents coming upon a sleeping child often exclaim, "He's dead to the world!" By that they mean, he's so lost in his dreams, he's oblivious to all else. Paul was like that. "This one thing I do . . ." he said, as he pressed toward his goal in Christ. All Christians, by virtue of the cross, can be dead to the world. Having the new nature they can occupy solely with Christ — if they want to. When that happens, they are "dead to the world." The cross also seals the world's fate. With Satan and his world both consigned to destruction (death), the world is as good as dead to the Christian. How foolish then for a Christian to look to the world for anything, whether family, fortune or fame? He already has these in Christ — **forever!**

15. It doesn't make a bit of difference whether one is circumcised or not. What really counts is that the man in Christ reveals he has become a new creation. 16. May all who allow their lives to be governed by this principle, experience God's mercy and peace, for they are the true Israel of God.



COUNTS. Circumcision has to do with the flesh and the flesh has to do with the old nature. Since the old nature is "crucified" with Christ, circumcision, far from being a matter for glorying, is **nothing**. The cross reduces it to a meaningless exercise of the flesh. Paul hopes his letter will have a converting effect on his readers and they will turn from the Judaizers who are more concerned with outward observances than with living to please God. He asks them to make a mental shift and be "transformed by

the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Since they now have the new nature they can walk in the Spirit if they want to. If they follow that principle, the teachings of the Judaizers will be meaningless to them.



GOVERNED. Paul pronounces God's blessing on all who henceforth (after reading his epistle) allow their lives to be guided solely by the Spirit to reveal the new man. Only in this way can they display the new creation wrought in them (2 Cor. 5:17). Those understanding what it is to "walk in the Spirit," determining to live after the flesh no longer, identify themselves as the spiritual seed of Abraham for they live by faith. Paul is teaching that the true Israel of God consists of those who have no use for the flesh (circumcision included). In calling the Galatians the "true Israel of God," Paul sees Judaism as fulfilled in Christianity. Christianity is the TRUE Judaism, the spiritual and real Israel of God.

17. Please spare me any further anxieties in this matter, for I bear in my body the scars of suffering which are the brand-marks of my Master, the Lord Jesus.



BRAND-MARKS. Paul suffered fiercely to bring Christ to the Gentiles. The Judaizers were usually not far behind him stirring up trouble and seeking to nullify his ministry. Consequently he had been "thrice beaten," and lines showed in his body where he had 200 stripes laid on him per the custom in Jewish synagogues, plus his scars from stonings. He says those marks in his body prove he is a true slave of the Lord Jesus. The word brand-marks (Greek: stigmata) has reference to masters branding their slaves, a custom of the time. Paul begs his readers not to add to his afflictions by continuing to listen to the persecution-shunning false teachers. How those marks in Paul's body condemn the luxury and ease of fashionable Christianity. It is still true today, "if a man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

"Paul isn't angry with them, is he?"

18. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren, Amen.



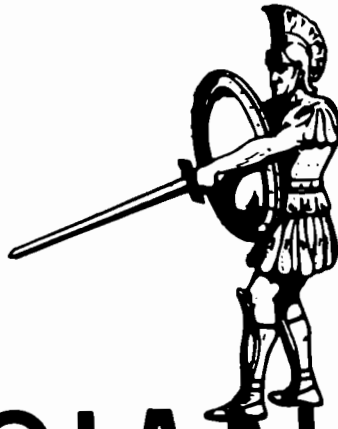
SPIRIT. God's grace is meant to operate upon the human spirit. Paul's words, "with your spirit," mean, "may God's grace be with your minds as you weigh my words." He has beautifully defended his apostleship and his ministry. Even though his trained mind has presented the matter of justification by faith with unshakable logic, it still takes the grace of God for them to see it. Satan easily blinds Christians to the truth, particularly when emotions are involved. The Galatians were an emotional people. He prayed that their minds would be able to grasp the truth as it really is, and not as the corrupting Judaizers presented it. It is most urgent that they SEE how Christianity is a matter of trusting in Jesus alone.



BRETHREN. After sounding his fears for his wayward Galatians, after delivering those scoldings and rebukes, the last thought of his heart is confidence. It was unusual for him to do so, but he put the word "brethren" at the end of his sentence, just before the solemn amen. Perhaps he means to call their attention to the fact that they are still his precious brothers even though he called them "stupid Galatians" earlier. By putting it at the end of the sentence, this would be the final word in their ears . . . "brethren." As twilight closes the hustle and bustle of the day, so Paul closes his letter with a loving expression of brotherhood. His parting word is warm, calculated to woo the emotional Galatians.

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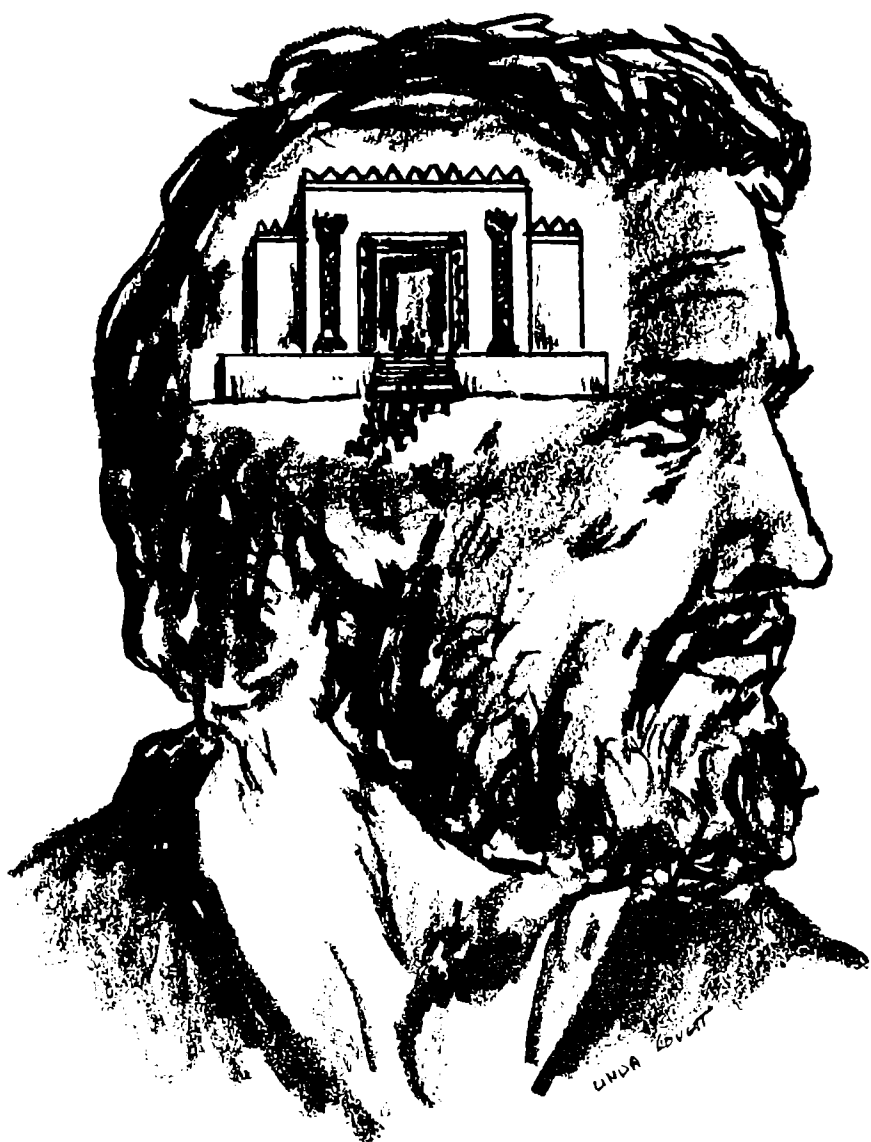
EPHESIANS

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EPHESIANS

PAUL UNVEILS
GOD'S HIDDEN
SECRET



It's around AD 62 and Paul could die. He's awaiting Caesar's decision. Prison gives a person time to think. The Holy Spirit moves. Paul's mind flashes to the great temple of Diana (Artemis), one of the seven wonders of the world. Jealousy for God's house burns within him. If a dead god could enjoy a dwelling of such magnificence, what must be the glory of God's house!

Paul knew. "Caught up to the third heaven,"* he beheld things no other human had seen. He saw the mystery of God's dwelling. He knew it was composed of living people called out of the stream of history. Of course — a living temple for the living God — nothing less would do! Paul was instructed in the secrets of the church's origin, development, even her future. How awful if it should all die with him.

"I'd better make a record of these things and get it off to Ephesus before anything happens to me!"

Why the Ephesians? The temple of Diana was in Ephesus. The Ephesians would understand. They saw how that great temple involved and dominated the citizens. As the cultural and financial center of Asia, the commerce and lives of the people were regulated by it. They'd appreciate temple-talk. Besides, six years before, Paul had spent three years with the Ephesians. Many had been his students in the school of Tyrannus.** Once they grasped the truths, they would be able to share his letter with the other churches of Asia Minor.

He calls for his secretary. The task is almost too much for the quill. Profound truths roll as Paul dictates. So unspeakably noble are these ideas, language barely holds them, even the precise Greek! Here are the loftiest lines of the New Testament, for they unveil the mind of God to expose the mystery of His church! What is recorded in Ephesians is well beyond the scope of the average reader unless reduced to everyday working truth.

That is the task of this REPHRASING TECHNIQUE. The insight paragraphs unlock the secrets placing them at your finger tips. Then, as you read, God uses the questions and insights to give you the adventure of Ephesians. When the fulness of the Book is yours, you begin to understand a little of who you are . . . "IN CHRIST!"

*2 Cor. 12:2 **Acts 19:9, 10

EPHESIANS

1 1. Paul, uniquely appointed by God as an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the saints at Ephesus, that is, those who are true believers in Christ Jesus.



SAINTS. Why this double characterization of saints and believers? The city of Ephesus was sacred to the pagans due to the presence of the great temple of Diana (Artemis), one of the seven wonders of the world. Those serving this temple, from the priests down to the sweepers, were called "holy men," or saints. With this term applying to Christians and pagans alike, it was necessary for Paul to define the word "saint," lest some confuse his reference. He wants no hint that the saints of Diana have any connection with Christ.

2. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.



GRACE. This word, occurring 13 times in the epistle, means that without anything deserving on our part, God confers fantastic spiritual properties on His saints. It is an important word in this letter which seeks to explain some of our holdings in Christ. But even the marvellous Greek language fails. Paul hardly begins to speak of our treasure in Christ when you feel the strain on the language. Peace, of course, comes as we sample the first bit of God's grace, total forgiveness of our sins! With that as the beginning, who can fathom our real wealth in Christ. Another key word is "IN," occurring some 89 times. All that follows takes place "IN Christ!"

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who has endowed us with every last blessing available through Christ in the heavenlies.



HEAVENLIES. Another key, "in the heavenlies," appears here five times, yet occurs no other place in the N.T. On the surface the verse suggests only the amassing of our spiritual inheritance, but a deeper meaning is present. Recall that Jesus' victory over Satan was not merely physical, but extended to the spirit-world or heavenlies. Where's that? Not some distant place beyond the starry sky, but just outside your skin — no more than a heart beat away. The spirit realms are along side this physical world, but we cannot behold them now. Not only has God conferred on us all that is His in glory, but the means for triumphing over Satan. This is important for we have, at this moment, an enemy who is attacking us from the heavenlies.

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"What moved God to be so generous!"

4. Even before the foundations of the universes were established, God selected us from the envisioned human stream to become His beloved in Christ. It was His intention to bring us to such holiness that He wouldn't be able to find a single blemish, though He studied us with the most penetrating gaze. It was love, of course, that moved Him to do this.



SELECTED. Could anything be worse than a God of love with no one to love? Thus a plan for producing **eternal companions** was commenced. The first step was His choice of us in Christ, even before the universes existed. Since the selection is made "through Jesus," it is apparent the "faith method" was the basis on which God made His choices. These companions could not be anything but holy, since they are to spend eternity with a HOLY God. The plan therefore included a means for bringing sinful men to perfection. It will be to His everlasting praise that He devised an ingenious way to do this through Christ!

5. For the pure pleasure it brought Him, He determined ahead of time that we should be raised to adult sonship in Jesus Christ, fully capable of mature fellowship with Himself.

6. It is an amazing testimony to His grace that He would do such a thing for us through His beloved Son.



SONSHIP. God does not plan on spending eternity with pets or coddled inferiors. He yearns for fellowship. He wants to share His life with people like Himself. This is the point of earthly marriage — it teaches us how to participate in a life-fellowship. The term, "Bride of Christ," indicates our elevation to **adulthood**, where we will participate in God's future on the same level as Himself. Eternity is too long a stretch for anything less. Our minds may be staggered by what it really means to become an **ADULT** son of God. Still, His Spirit witnesses that undreamed things are in store for those who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9, 10).

"How far does God carry this matter of showering His grace upon us?"

7. Our redemption, which includes total forgiveness for our sins, was made possible by the Son. And because He is as fully gracious and generous as the Father, He willingly redeemed us at the price of His own blood.



REDEEMED. In the Greek, this word and its derivations point to rescue by ransom, regardless of price. For our redemption, the stated price was the privilege of slaying the sinless Son of God. Satan, who held us captive, asked this price thinking such a death would give him victory in his war with God. Instead, it released us from his grasp, providing total forgiveness for our sins. Since Jesus was fully man, He could serve as our "Kinsman Redeemer" in paying the stated price (Lev. 25:48). Satan, of course, never suspected Jesus' death was also the central genius of God's plan for our rescue (1 Cor. 2:8).

8. And if that were not enough, He lavishes still more grace upon us by supplying the wisdom and insights which permit us to know and understand 9. the inner workings of His

plan. Now why should He shower such wondrous grace? Because it gives Him extreme pleasure to have us understand His secret purposes in Christ!



WISDOM. The mysteries of God are easily intelligible and never perplexing. They are simple truths, but knowable only through revelation. They remain concealed or veiled until God is ready to reveal them. While these things remain hidden to those outside of Christ, it is His desire that we should be in on His plans. In fact, such knowledge is to motivate our lives in living for Him. God, you see, has already opened His heart to us, anxious for the **eternal fellowship** to begin now (1 John 1:3). As our awareness of the master plan increases, so does our ability to enter into the divine fellowship. It is expected that we will lay hold of these things to the place where they regulate our lives and deepen our involvement.

10. When God's plan for the earth reaches its conclusion, that is, when His purposes in history have been fully worked out, all things will have been redeemed and restored to their original condition through Christ. Not just things on earth, but in the heavenlies as well. Then it will be seen that we ourselves are, in Him, the glorious consummation of it all. The whole purpose behind God's plan is—**MAN!**



RESTORED. Sin, beginning with the satanic revolt, wrecked things — first in the heavenlies, then on earth. God's plan, which foresaw all this, calls for a complete restoration through Christ. Those two words instantly exclude Satan and his followers. Jesus accomplishes this restoration, not only through His earthly ministry, but even now by His present ministry in the Spirit. When history is ended, the redeemed of mankind will be the glorious result. God gets what He purposed, ingeniously using sin to refine the finished product. Thus His great wisdom is magnified.

"You make it sound like we are all God cares about. Is this true?"

11. This is what is so amazing. The Lord inherits as His personal property all that He redeems. And while this makes us His purchased possession, that's not all that happens. We inherit something too — HIM! This is also a part of the master plan of God, Who can take anything that happens and make it fit that plan. Thus it is that nothing can frustrate His original intention.



INHERIT. The passive form of this word in the Greek is capable of a double meaning. The Authorized Version says we are allotted an inheritance in Christ, the Revised Version says, we are Christ's allotted inheritance. Both are true. Taken together they enrich each other. Consequently we are His and He is ours. We become His property, purchased by His blood. Yet, since we are "in Him," we become "joint-heirs" of all that is His in glory (Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:21, 23).

12. Now it is true that we (Jewish saints) were scheduled as the first to bring glory to His Name through our trust in Him as Messiah. 13. But that priority in no way excludes you (Gentile Christians), for you too, after hearing the message of the Truth, trusted in Him also. So that now, having believed the good news of your salvation, you too are embossed with the Great Seal of Heaven, the promised Holy Spirit.



SEAL. The objects sealed are people. Therefore the Great Seal of Heaven is also a Person. The instant one is saved, his soul is embossed to the effect, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the

sons of God" (Rom. 8:16). At once God's Spirit functions as might any seal: (1) **Revealing the authority behind the transaction.** The fact that this Seal is the Third Person of the Godhead forbids all tampering. (2) **Unalterable nature of the transaction.** Once the seal is fixed, no changes can be made in the terms. The matter is forever settled. (3) **Ownership of the property.** Seals also serve as a burned-on brand or I.D. tag. As soon as God accepts the redeemed property, His Seal goes into place. No one else can claim it after that!

14. Thus God is guaranteed that He will come into actual possession of His purchased property. But here is something else to the praise of His Glory! The Holy Spirit is not only a Seal, but also a **DOWN PAYMENT** guaranteeing our future inheritance!



DOWN PAYMENT. The Spirit of God seals us, But He is also an advance on our future inheritance. We get some of heaven's wealth right now, an advance payment **IN KIND!** Since the initial payment is a **PERSON**, the balance of our inheritance is also a Person — **JESUS!** All that you and I have awaiting us may be summed in one word — Jesus. He is our wealth and we are His. Our future satisfactions, glory and thrills and completeness are in Christ. Isn't it clear that God is in the people-business? The master plan has a single objective — people. A people designed to spend eternity with God capable of bringing Him as much satisfaction as He is to them!

"Doesn't it thrill you Paul, to have such a big role in all this!"

15. I too play my part. And ever since I have had word of your faith in the Lord Jesus and the practical way you are showing your love toward God's people, 16. I have never once stopped thanking God for you. I constantly mention you in my prayers 17. asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the All-Glorious

Father, to give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, thus permitting a fuller knowledge of Himself.



REVELATION. Consider that this letter is addressed to the lower ranks of society; slaves, artisans, uneducated people. What is more obvious than the fact the new faith produces a wondrous mental stimulation. Salvation brings an extraordinary excitement in thought-action. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds and accelerate our understanding so that we may comprehend and revel in the mysteries of God. As soon as we receive Him, this supernatural education begins.

18. Specifically I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may behold the intimate details of His plan. I want you to be stirred by the fantastic glory He has in store for His people.



HEART EYES. Man, who is more than a body, has two sets of eyes — physical and spiritual. The inner eyes remain closed until opened by God's Spirit. This inner vision is called "spiritual insight." These "heart eyes" alone may contemplate the mysteries of God. Christian excitement comes as we behold the wonders of God's plan and how it relates to us personally. Possessed of such insight, we can know the thrill of working with God in carrying out the plan. Paul is aware that there can be no real involvement with the Lord or motivation for serving Him, apart from an intimate knowledge of what is going on.

"We need more than knowledge, don't we? It takes power too!"

19. And that you may know the staggering greatness of His power in your own life. You get an idea of the magnitude of His might
20. when you consider the strength He dis-

played in raising Christ from the dead and setting Him at His right hand in the heavens,

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POWER. It's one thing to see the plan of God, quite another to live it. That takes power. Paul's prayer includes a request for that divine energy enabling the believer to: (1) live a holy life in an unholy world; (2) stand fast against the cunning assaults of the devil; (3) witness and win souls in obedience to the Master's command. All of these require the same dynamic which raised the Lord to glory. Jesus' seat at the "right hand," bespeaks His absolute authority over the spirit world. We need authority for our own spiritual battles, so we are very interested in how much authority Jesus really has. Paul tells us next.

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21. exalting Him over and above all governments and authorities, powers and lordships, and every name that is known, not only in this world but also in the one to come. 22. Everything has been placed under the dominion of Christ. And God has given Him, Who is the Head of all things, also to be the Head of the church, 23. which is His body. This makes the church, then, the actual fulness of a Person to Whom everything in existence owes its being.



HIS BODY. Paul uses the figure of a human body to picture the relationship of Christ to His church. Thus, everything that happens to Jesus happens to us, and vice versa. You and I literally become partakers of: (a.) the life, (b.) the power, (c.) the program, (d.) and the eternal destiny of Jesus Himself. His own past, present and future is as closely joined to us as our own head to our body. Deep within us is a mystical connection which means that our lives are no longer our own, but are now to be regulated and governed by the Head. Just as the temple of Diana shaped the daily lives of the Ephesians, so is the body of Christ the great involvement of our souls.

2 1. And you, dear reader, He has brought to life. For you too were dead by reason of your trespasses and sins.



DEAD. Physical death is the separation of one's soul from his body. Spiritual death is the separation of one's soul from God. Everything evil is isolated from God by virtue of His absolute holiness. Prior to salvation, we all existed in a death environment where Satan had us enslaved through our evil thoughts and deeds. As dead things cannot give life to themselves, neither can evil man make himself holy. Thus we were all trapped, needing help from the outside. Jesus' resurrection power, mentioned above, rescues us from this death state. How? By union with Christ. The life is actually His. We get it by being joined to Him.

"You mean we were physically alive, yet existing in spiritual death!"

2. All that time you were completely at home in the ways of the world, moved along by its unseen god, Satan, whose domain is the air (spirit-world). His influence today, as always, is like a dark cloud surrounding the human spirit, penetrating and motivating the fallen, disobedient nature of mankind.



CLOUD. Satan's kingdom is in view here. Scripture insists on his reality. His abode is not some distant realm, but that nebulous region immediately surrounding men's spirits. Paul uses the Greek word for air to picture his presence and proximity to our souls. With his agents, he operates just beyond the wall of the flesh, unseen, unfelt—as close as the air we breathe. As the body is required to inhale any smog about it, so is the human spirit subjected to satanic influence. The unholy spirit is as close to us as the Holy Spirit, operating in similar fashion.

3. All of us were bound in that state at one time, responding only to the satanically in-

spired impulses of our evil natures, so that we too were led to obey the cravings of our instincts and went about satisfying the longings of our flesh. Like others, we didn't realize we were accumulating God's wrath, that our very natures were sending us to hell.



WRATH. God's hatred of sin is unquestioned. That man is born with a sinful nature is also conceded. The infant does not arrive in this world with God's wrath upon him. Yet, as soon as he is capable of a responsible thought or act, he will sin. Why? His nature (satanically inspired) guarantees it. Consequently all are under wrath, because that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). The only remedy is receiving a **new nature** not subject to Satan's influence. God rescues us from Satan's domain by providing us with Christ's own victorious nature at salvation.

"Could God actually fall in love with people like that?"

4. BUT GOD, Whose mercy has no limit and Who was already in love with us, 5. even when we were trapped in our unholiness and spiritually dead, has now made us alive in Christ. Clearly our salvation is entirely by grace.



BUT GOD. Those two words mark the turning point for men. All are headed for hell until God intervenes. His action is prompted by love. Besides, He has such a merciful nature He was compelled to act in behalf of fallen man rather than destroy him and shift to some other project. Think what the real nature of man must be if the Almighty God **can fall in love with him!** Is it not unthinkable that God would have a love affair with those who could not respond to Him in kind!

6. By virtue of our union with Christ Jesus, we also were raised up with Him and are even

now seated with Him in the heavenlies,



SEATED. The unsaved mind cannot comprehend this, for we just barely do ourselves. Our **literal union** with Christ brings many things into actuality which we cannot now behold. They are spiritual realities un-examinable by the senses. It is by virtue of our being "in Christ" that we accept our **authority** in the spiritual realm. By faith we understand that we have been exalted to the same spiritual posture as Jesus, Who is seated at the right hand of God. That's a long way from our former slavery in the kingdom of Satan. To sit in the presence of the Great King is again a fantastic honor which further bespeaks the astonishing dignity of redeemed man. What is man that he can be raised to such heights?

7. where we shall forever remain as living testimonies to His matchless grace, the objects of His limitless kindness.



TESTIMONIES. The most astonishing thing heaven has ever seen was its King stripping Himself of His outward royalty to step down into the human stream. There He suffered spiteful indignities and death to rescue us. His sacrifice is never to be forgotten, for you and I become living monuments to His amazing grace. As long as we live, the cross which lifted us to fellowship with God will be remembered. Equally precious is the fact that His generosity did not stop at Calvary. God is a Giver! Generosity is built into His nature. He is complete only when He has someone to whom He can give Himself — forever!

"Then salvation is an outright free gift!"

8. Be clear on this — it is by grace that you have been saved. True, faith was the instrument, but even so, salvation itself is something in which you have had no part. It is the gift of God, 9. and not the result of any human

effort. Consequently there is no room for any human pride.



GIFT. The Holy Spirit wants it perfectly clear that man's rescue and exaltation to such heights is something that God has done by Himself. Even though the faith-method was used to make the selection of those who would receive this gift, the gift itself is not the work of human hands. Even the ability to exercise faith in Christ requires a "pre-salvation work" of the Holy Spirit (John 6:44). The enslavement by Satan, through the old nature, is such that God's Spirit must **enable** us to accept the free gift in Christ. While He does this for all men, since there is "no respect of persons with God," yet "not all men will exercise faith" (2 Thess. 3:2).

10. We are completely the workmanship of God. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus designed only for good works. And those very works were planned out beforehand as something which should follow our salvation experience.



NEW CREATION. Once more the genius of God bursts forth. Instead of destroying our old natures, **He uses them.** As soon as a man is saved, he owns two natures, old (inherited from Adam) and new (Christ's own). It is the struggle between these two natures that makes for Christian growth. Maturity comes as we decide more and more for Christ and less for self, something which is impossible apart from owning two natures. Inasmuch as the old nature drops off at physical death, the Christian himself is referred to as a "new creature" in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Of course God plans for Christians to display their new nature and be done with the old, but it is having to determine to do so, moment by moment, that builds us in Christ.

"Does the same apply whether one is Jew or Gentile?"

11. You shouldn't forget that you were born Gentiles and called "the uncircumcised" by

the Jews, whose bodies are circumcised by human hands. 12. At that time you had no access to Christ. As far as the Jews were concerned, who were indeed God's chosen people, the heavenly rights and promises had nothing to do with you at all. In fact, you were isolated from God without any hope in this world.



ISOLATED. Until the advent of Christ, salvation was available only through the nation of Israel. True, they failed miserably in the task of being a "light unto the Gentiles." Nonetheless pagans could be saved only as they joined the commonwealth of Israel and embraced the God of the Jews. It was thus Ruth first said, "Thy people shall be my people," and then, "Thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). This was the stated order, there was no other way. Paul says, remember that while considering what Christ has done for you.

13. But now, through your union with Christ Jesus, you who were once outside the wall have been brought inside by the blood of Christ.

14. For Christ Himself has brought us all to peace with God. In cancelling the Jewish-Gentile distinctions and removing the wall that separated us, He put us all on the same basis with respect to God.



WALL. In Israel, markers and walls, separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Tabernacle. It meant death for a Gentile to enter beyond that point. This physical separation dramatized the spiritual separation from God due to sin. Israel stood in the place of God as far as the rest of the world was concerned. However, once the death of Christ solved the sin problem for all (Jew and Gentile), the national Jewish distinctions vanished. The term "blood of Christ," is carried over from the O.T. where animal sacrifices foreshadowed the death of Jesus. Used in the New Testament, it means the literal application of Jesus' death for sin and life in the Spirit to one's soul.

"Then you're saying Christ's death eliminated Judaism?"

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15. The instant Jesus died and rose again, the Jewish Law with all of its rules and decrees was abolished. With those gone, there were no longer two classes. In His death, He brought into being a new family, composed of Jews and Gentiles alike, thereby ending the religious hostility and making peace. 16. In reconciling both to God through His cross and bringing them into the one family, He eliminated the reason for the hostility that existed. Now there is no longer any cause for antagonism.



LAW. The Jewish laws, not the moral Law of God which stands forever, were the ones abolished. They regulated the behavior of this nation which was commissioned to enact on the world stage the great drama of the coming Messiah and His sacrifice for the sins of the world. They did this for 1500 years, but once the Sacrifice Himself appeared and personally expiated sin, the national drama was over. Therefore the Jew-Gentile separation, which was a part of that drama, ended with it. It has been replaced with something real — the church — the one body of Christ.

17. He came with great tidings for both. Those who were outside the wall and those inside heard the same announcement — the war is over! 18. And because of Him, all of us, Jews and Gentiles, have direct access in the One Spirit to God The Father.



DIRECT ACCESS. The O.T. tabernacle drama, with its holy place (Jesus' earthly ministry), its veil (His body) and Most Holy place (His Spirit-ministry), pictured Christ's complete work. The rending of the temple veil indicated

that His torn body had just opened the way into heaven. No longer were priests or mediators, or ceremonial formulas required for us to reach the Father. Now, by means of our new holy natures, we are personally welcome in His presence. Our imaginations become the sanctuary. Our sonship in Christ gives us the right to be there and our Spirit-imparted holiness allows us to relax and feel at home. We can even live in God's presence if we want to.

19. Consequently you Gentiles are no longer outsiders and foreigners, but fellow saints with all true believers and members of God's one family.

"How about the Old Testament saints, are they in the family too?"

20. The church is built not only upon the apostles, but also the prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself the Chief Cornerstone.



THE CHURCH. Here the church is pictured as a building. Paul is no doubt reflecting upon the splendid glory of Diana's temple. His mind is stirred with jealousy. He envisions God's House as exceeding anything made with hands, for His temple is composed of **living people**. The prophets of old, who declared essentially the same message as the Apostles, are included, thus bringing together the saints of both dispensations. Of course nothing could be constructed until Jesus died, for He Himself is the First Stone from which the rest of the building is laid out. Paul gives more details in Chapter four.

21. The whole structure is composed of people, beautifully fitted together in Christ. It is a growing temple dedicated solely to the Lord.

22. And because of your union with Christ, you too are being molded into your place along with the others. Together we are a house in which God lives through His Spirit.



GROWING TEMPLE. This church is a living organism. Even more it is **growing!** As the lives of God's people blossom it becomes lovelier. Such a temple quickly outclasses that of Diana, for what heathen god ever had a living temple? Dead gods can't use a living temple. Only the Living God could even dwell in such a thing! Thus the Body of Christ, wonderfully bonding souls together by the very life of Jesus, provides God with a living house. It is this which forms the basis of Paul's plea for Christian unity. He sees the loveliness of God's house marred when Christians divide over small matters and fail to love one another. A God of love needs a house of love!

EPH

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3 1. Do you know why I, Paul, am a prisoner like this? It is on account of you Gentiles. And for that reason I—

"Why do you stop!"

2. I've been taking for granted you are familiar with the special grace God has shown toward you by His appointment of me as your steward, 3. and that you know how it was by direct revelation that He made known to me the mystery which I have just shared with you in brief.



APPOINTMENT. Paul refers to his dramatic conversion on the Damascus road where he met Jesus and received his apostleship. Then, and in subsequent revelations, he received insight into the mysteries of Christ. Here he speaks of the particular mystery of the body of Christ, the church. He is about to pray for their understanding as to their role in that body, when it occurs to him to make sure they remember that he was called to pioneer the Gentile department within the household of God (body of Christ).

"You mean God specifically chose you to explain His mysteries to us Gentiles?"

4. By referring to what I have just written, you will see that I have indeed been introduced

to the mystery of Christ and possess an insight 5. which was hidden from the sons of men in past generations. Now of course, it is being revealed by the Holy Spirit through His apostles and prophets.



MYSTERY. The truth of the Gentiles being admitted to salvation was never hidden and neither was the fact that they would one day receive a call (Isa. 56:6, 7; Rom. 9:25, 26). But that they would someday be admitted without circumcision and made equal to the Jews, by means of an entirely new institution, was never once hinted. The truth of the body of Christ, in which God would live, was reserved for N.T. preaching where it was to become a startling dimension of Christ's glory.

6. Specifically hidden was the fact that in Christ Jesus the Jews and the Gentiles were to become joint-heirs of God, equal members of the same body, and co-sharers of the promised Holy Spirit — all through the preaching of the Gospel.



HIDDEN. Indeed it was hidden. Who expected the Messiah to show up as a Carpenter and be crucified by His own people? Once that happened, a whole new program went into effect. The church, the new program; had to remain a mystery until Jesus was disowned by Israel. God's nation could have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit to become God's spiritual house, but she forfeited the privilege. Knowing that, God's secret plan called for a new nation, a spiritual one built of Jews and Gentiles alike—through Christ (1 Peter 2:9, 10). While Peter was the first to win Gentiles, Paul was the one appointed to head up the new program for non-Jews.

"You seem surprised that God picked you!"

7. According to His wondrous grace and a remarkable exercise of His power, God made

me a minister of this Gospel. 8. Imagine picking someone like myself — the very least of all saints — to receive this grace! To think that I should be the one to preach the inexhaustible riches of Christ to the Gentiles!



LEAST. Paul's persecution of the church, before his conversion, lingers in his mind as the strongest expression of his sin. So that when compared with all other Christians, he regards himself as the most unworthy. Aware that God's grace has reached down so low and that His power has raised him so high (from Saul the persecutor to Paul the Apostle), his being is filled with a sense of unworthiness. The Spirit would have us see that Paul's office was a gift, totally apart from any personal worth in the Apostle. What vessel can take credit when all of the work done through him is by God!

"Just why was the truth of the one body in Christ hidden?"

9. God, Who planned these things in His primal counsels and kept this secret hidden for ages, has given me the task of bringing to light the details of this mystery and putting them into operation. 10. But why did He hold it all in secret until now? That all the angelic powers, with their rulers and authorities, should behold the fantastic wisdom of God as it unfolded in the development of the church.



NOW! How startling that the central feature of God's master-plan, the church, was a top secret locked in His heart. It was kept from the entire spirit-world! Jesus said He was going to build His church, but who dreamed it was going to be a living house for the Living God! One which He plans to occupy for the rest of His life! The Greek indicates that God's church is like a theatre where His wisdom is being acted out to educate the spirit-world as to the size of His heart and genius.

11. It was always His purpose to do this, but the timing had to wait until the accomplishment of Christ Jesus our Lord.



TIMING. We know it was necessary to keep the church a secret, otherwise God wouldn't have done so. The Greek does not insist that He did this merely to show off His wisdom. Paul speaks of God's "hidden wisdom," a wisdom kept from the rulers of this age (Satan's gang); for if they had understood it, "they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Cor. 2:7, 8). Thus it appears that Satan's rebellion and scheming was a part of God's foreknowledge and included in His master plan. Obviously the details of God's plan for his defeat would have to be withheld. And so the church remained a mystery until Jesus' part in destroying Satan's work was done. Satan apparently never suspected that Jesus' death sealed his own doom.

"Are you sure we Gentiles really have complete access to God now!"

12. It is in Christ, and that by virtue of our faith in Him, that we not only have free access to God, but can feel perfectly at ease in His presence.



AT EASE. Is this surprising? We are God's home! First we receive Christ. That makes us alive. Simultaneously we are baptized into His body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13). Thus we become God's temple, the seat of His throne. Surely one ought to feel close to God when his own heart is the throne room! Our relaxation is in direct proportion to our faith in Jesus. The more we rely on His merits, rather than our own, the more we feel at home. Who would have guessed this "temple truth" was behind Jesus' words, "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me and I in you?" (John 14:20).

13. Now that you have this explanation as to the nature of my ministry, the fact that I am in prison on your account shouldn't dampen

your spirits. Actually, God is honoring you Gentiles by this means.

EPH

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"Say, didn't you start to pray awhile back!" (Vs. 1).

14. It is with all these things in mind that I bow my knees unto the Father, 15. with Whom the whole idea of fatherhood and families originates, whether in heaven or on earth.

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FATHERHOOD. Paul would expand God's glory. Not content to call Him Father, he observes that all paternal care and protections, whether seen in the animal kingdom, the earthly kingdom, or the spirit-world itself, stem from the fact that the Creator Himself is also a Father. The very idea of fatherhood flows from the fact that the creation was made by a Father. For this reason the Word instructs us to pray to the Father, in the Name of the Son, in and through the Holy Spirit.

16. I am asking this glorious Person, that because of His immeasurable generosity He would let you experience the strengthening might of the Holy Spirit in the inner man.



INNER MAN. This is the rational "I" (ego), which must constantly choose between the old nature and the new one. The growing image of God has to be reinforced by the Spirit if one is to live godly. The new nature, which is Christ's own, needs no strengthening. It is the soul that needs God's help. Satan's spirit works on the soul continually. Therefore God's Spirit must work too, if a man is going to reveal his new nature. Paul is not praying for the Ephesians to receive the Spirit, only that they would sample His might in their souls. It is the power of the HOLY Spirit that enables us to live a holy life. This has to appear in our lives before Paul's next request is even possible.

17a. So that your faith would produce a holiness which would allow Christ to feel completely at home in your hearts.



AT HOME. This answers to our feeling at home in God's presence. Paul is asking for the kind of faith that results in a holy life, making it possible for the Holy One to relax and enjoy His new home. This is only fair. If He makes it possible for us to feel at ease in God's presence, we ought to make it possible for Him to relax within us. When one lives a holy life, the result is great pleasure for the Lord. When He is delighted you can feel it. Besides it makes possible the next request of Paul.

17b. I pray that from this amazing love match, in which you have rooted your new life and founded your new character, 18. you and all the saints jointly may attain to the even larger experience of comprehending the breadth and length and depth and height—



DIMENSIONS. In the Greek, Paul pauses on the word "height." His aroused imagination pictures Christ's love in mathematical terms. Rather than just saying "greatness," he thinks to bring the scope of it to their minds by expressing measurements. The context unlocks the meanings: one dimension looks back over the eons to when He first loved us, another to the endless future, still another to the depths He reached to rescue us, with the last pointing to the heights to which His love has raised us — full partners in His Glory! But mere dimensions are not enough. So he stops, realizing that more than mere intelligence is needed.

19a. and to know by experience and exploration the love of Christ, which is something that can never be known by mere intellectual acquaintance.



LOVE OF CHRIST. Try telling your teen-ager what love is like. Give him books to read. Does he yet know? He must fall in love for himself. Knowledge is no substitute for experience. So it is with experiencing Jesus. One must meet Him, fall in love and "marry" Him. And after that come years of exploring the oceans of His gentleness, mercy, kindness and generosity. Jesus is so wonderful, it takes time to discover what a truly marvellous Person He is!

19b. As soon as you become aware of the astounding love He has for you, may the experience of it so grip the roots of your being that you become filled with all the fulness of God!



FULNESS! What a prayer request! The Greek means to be as full as God is full! Some take drugs to expand their consciousness, hoping to discover more about themselves. But through the Holy Spirit Christians learn they are joined in spiritual wedlock to the Creator! Beyond that, they find He is "desperately" in love, living only to see that they are completely satisfied! Talk of self-realization, why we are involved with the Godhead Himself — growing and reaching for the very likeness of the Most High! We know who we are, how we came to be and our eternal destiny. That's enough to make any man let go of this world and cling only to Jesus! The Christian who does, experiences a rapture of soul this world cannot match!

"Wow! There can't be anything else can there, after all this!"

20. He Who exerts His power within us is not only able to do things like this, but so much more and in such measure that it goes beyond anything we can picture in our minds or dream of asking Him!



ABLE. Consider that the One Who is so "hopelessly" in love with us, is also the amazing Genius behind the physical creation, that has scientists and investigators gasping. Think what He can prepare for those Whom He

adores! It is no wonder that, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard . . . ," the things that are in store for us. The God of the snowflake, of which no two are alike in a bucketful, a mountain range or the glaciers of the ages — never runs out of ideas. It is into fellowship with a Person like that, that we have been invited to spend eternity, participating as marriage-partners and equals! Yes, He has the power to fill us with Himself and raise us to full adulthood . . . and then some.

21. Oh what glory is due Him! And may He receive it all through His church in Christ Jesus—forever and ever! Amen.

4 1. I therefore beg you—and as you read, do remember I am wearing these chains for the Lord's sake — please live a life that measures up to the exalted glory that is yours in this wondrous call!



THEREFORE. Always ask, "What is Paul's therefore, there for?" These transition points gather into themselves all that he has presented before. He now shifts from doctrine to Christian duty, but the exhortations are based on our glories in Christ. They call for a specific behavior pattern. However the thrill of what he has just written must capture a person before he is truly involved in the new life. Once God answers what Paul has just asked, his readers will revel in their holy exaltation. With such glory gripping a man's soul, he should respond with a life that matches it.

"What do you mean by measure up — specifically?"

2. Accept the trials and honors of life with humility; accept God's dealings with you without argument or resistance; accept patiently the injuries done you by men, and be careful all the while to manifest Christian love by making allowances for the faults of one an-

other. 3. When it comes to safeguarding the unity of the Spirit, turn yourselves into watchdogs, for the Spirit Himself was given to bind you together.

"Why the heavy emphasis on oneness!"

4. There is only one body in the one Spirit. When each of you was called, it was to the one hope 5. in the one Lord, through the one act of believing which resulted in the one baptism, 6. all unto the one Father, Who is over us all in His sovereignty, through us all in terms of equality, and in us all as our source of life!



ONE. Behold the priority of Christian unity! It is sad when men give priority to doctrines which divide rather than the things which unite us in the living body. Paul focuses our eyes on our common experience: (1) All made a part of a single body and alive in the one Spirit. (2) Having responded to the same call, we all anticipate the same hope of heaven. (3) We have come to the same Lord with the same faith resulting in the same baptism. (4) The deepest basis for our unity being sonship of the One God. The Trinity has accomplished this. Consequently, as the Trinity cannot be at odds with Himself, neither ought those who are made one with the Godhead! Shame on us when we let small matters destroy this common bond.

"Our gifts and personalities vary. They create differences don't they!"

7. Of course there are different gifts, and one's personality functions according to the specific grace he has been given by Christ. This is what allows him to operate within the one body according to God's plan for his life.

8. The Scripture confirming this, says:

"When He ascended on high,
He took a host of captives with Him,
And He gave gifts unto men" (Psa.
68:18).



SPECIFIC GRACE. This is what lets us function as unique personalities. The God of the snowflake makes no two of us alike. Each receives from the Lord gifts and enablements consistent with his design specifications. True, "there is no respect of persons with the Lord," yet each is dealt the separate strengths and qualities which permit him to blossom in Christ. This strange working in each personality qualifies us for our different tasks within the one body. God has further designed that none of these differences should clash, but blend harmoniously. Therefore, personality differences do not have to cause disunity. But too often we let them.

"How does that Scripture relate to the matter of our gifts?"

9. See what this implies? To say that Christ "ascended" indicates that He first descended some place. Where? To the spiritual underworld, the lower parts of the earth.



ASCENDED. Paul employs a victory Psalm picturing David after a battle. He is in his city, surrounded by his legions, receiving tribute from conquered enemies and rewarding his friends with the spoils. Paul sees Jesus' triumphant return to heaven after battling Satan. Two things are taking place: (a.) He is receiving the spoils, i.e., the host of captives formerly held by Satan until the cross ransomed them. (b.) He is handing out gifts to men (His church). "Lower parts of the earth," refers to the spiritual underworld where Satan keeps the unbelieving dead. All the O.T. saints were there until Jesus' victory opened the way into heaven, where He led them home in a glorious procession. Authority over Satan is chief among the spoils which the Lord distributes to us even now.

10. And the One Who descended is the same identical Person as the One Who ascended beyond the heavens, so that He might bring the fulness of His presence to all.



PRESENCE. The very same Jesus Whom men saw physically ascend out of sight (Acts 1:9), now operates as the omnipresent Spirit of Christ. This is Christ in the Spirit, in which He delivered the O.T. saints from Satan's prison. We ought not to see Him as seated in heaven handing out gift packages, but working **inside us** transforming us into gifts for His church. He dwells within us graciously qualifying us for our role in the body. We must not separate Jesus from the Holy Spirit so sharply as to forbid His ministry in the Spirit, for it is by this means that He brings His **FULL PRESENCE** to you and me.

"Just what are these gifts to His church!"

11. His gifts are people. Some He gave as apostles, others as prophets; some as traveling missionaries or evangelists, while others serve as pastors with the ability to guide and teach the people. 12. All of them are charged with the task of equipping every believer for his personal ministry, with a view to the building up of the entire body of Christ.



PERSONAL MINISTRY. The leaders do not function for their own sake, but for the purpose of developing each saint as a minister to those around him. Every Christian is a minister to his own private world. Sadly, we have shifted from this concept, looking to Bible schools and seminaries to produce a "clergy," while the church program has been reduced to "meetings." Today the saints listen to sermons rather than minister. However, the Master's intention remains unchanged. It is still His plan for souls to be won outside the church, then brought in for instruction and fellowship. Each is to be trained in the use of his talents for reaching those around him as well as growing daily in the likeness of the Lord.

13. It is by this means that God purposes to weld us into a single unit in the faith, and through our experimental knowledge of the indwelling Son of God, come to maturity. The goal, obviously, is that we become so like Christ that we too display the divine personality in our lives.

"What happens if we don't mature!"

14. No one should remain a child. If we don't mature in Christ, we will find ourselves tossed about like waves responding to every wind of teaching that blows our way. What's worse, we remain completely at the mercy of any crafty word-handler who is expert in presenting doctrinal schemes. Until we grow, we cannot recognize the deceit in so many who are just waiting to pounce on immature Christians. 15. By advancing in the truth, with a love for both the brethren and the Word, we develop a more perfect relationship with Christ, Who is our Head.



HEAD. In the human body, the various members are completely controlled by the head. Paul applies this fact to Christ's body. He sees Christian maturity as increasing surrender to the headship of Christ. When we're first saved, we use our time, money and talents as we please. Gradually, more and more control passes to Jesus. The fullest maturity comes when it is no longer a matter of what "I" want to do, but what would Jesus have me do. Such surrender produces drastic changes in the life. Old ways are abandoned and the Christian emerges a different person. His whole personality is revamped in time.

"Why is Jesus' control of each individual so important!"

16. As He is able to have this control, then His whole body is organized into a harmonious structure. The individual members are fitted together and operate as the various joints do their part. With each functioning as it should, the whole body is able to enjoy the power of growth as it expands under the pressure of its new life-force, love! See now why unity is so important?



LIFE-FORCE. The life-force of the physical body is the blood which must flow unhindered throughout every part. The life-force working in Christ's church is love, which flows as each member submits himself to function in his place. The true church grows as believers link themselves to every other born-again child of God, looking beyond denominational boundaries to find their common delight in loving Jesus. Not only does each member grow, but tender concern for each other makes the entire body grow. What happens to one affects all the rest. Any service done or any hurt, even a harsh word, affects you and me whether we are immediately aware of it or not.

"How does this church truth relate to the exhortation you began above?"

17. This brings us to the place where I will now insist, in the Name of the Lord, that you not live as do the Gentiles, whose lives are guided by ungodly illusions arising within their self-centered imaginations. 18. Their pagan minds remain shrouded in darkness producing a hardness of heart which makes them insensitive to the Spirit's touch. This isolates them from the life of God. 19. These people have no shame. They quickly abandon themselves to sensuality, hungry in fact, for different ways to satisfy their lusts.



ISOLATED. Paul's mind returns to the fall where mankind, refusing God's leadership, was abandoned to run its course. By Noah's day, only eight people were worthy to be spared. The rest were so corrupt they were destroyed in the flood. Paul argues that any life not led by Jesus is subject to that same corruption. At one time the Ephesian Christians lived like that, but now that they possess Christ's own life, they are different. Therefore, Paul insists that they also LIVE differently. "Since you are different from the others," he says, "You must no longer act like them."

20. Did you ever hear of a hint of corruption in connection with Christ? 21. Again I am assuming you have heard and understood the truths He taught. The truth of Christ teaches that 22. you must shed your old nature, putting aside your old ways as you would a dirty bandage, for it is completely decayed with evil desires. Every one of your corrupt habits must go.



OLD NATURE. On the surface this sounds as simple as slipping out of an old suit. But not so. This suit is worn until we die. All sinful passions, desires, and evil memories continue with us after salvation — and are just as ready to express themselves when given opportunity. Salvation does not automatically get rid of this old nature. It brings a new nature to which a man can submit if he wants to. The old nature has to be constantly denied (put to death). In time, as the Christian reveals more and more of his new nature, the old nature is gradually subdued. Satan's access is through this old nature, guaranteeing a battle with evil until the day we die. Paul called this old nature a "body of death," praising God that Jesus gives victory over it (Rom. 7:24, 25).

23. Even the spirit of your mind has to undergo constant renewal.



SPIRIT OF MIND. This is not the ability to think, but the power of one's imagination to affect his behavior. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he!" The verb is passive in the Greek, showing this spirit can be acted upon by outsiders. The unholy spirit (Satan) and the Holy Spirit are the two outsiders who influence the Christian's mind. To exhibit a new life, requires that the Christian permit the Spirit to reach his mind with His suggestions (via the Word), just as he has been permitting Satan to deposit his carnal suggestions. At once we enter the real arena of the Christian's warfare, our thought-life. A man with two natures must continually choose the type of suggestion which is to dominate his thinking and be able to discern the source—whether from God or Satan.

24. And you must put on the new man who is fashioned after God the Creator in absolute moral perfection and holiness.



NEW MAN. Receiving Christ causes a union between our souls and the Holy Spirit, thereby producing a new creation. It would be proper to say a Christian is pregnant with the life of God. The new creation is as holy as Jesus, enveloped in His own victorious nature. Thus the Christian owns two natures and the struggle between them makes his growth possible. Paul uses the terms "put off" and "put on," to describe the innumerable decisions a Christian must make in the course of a single hour. Whom will he please? When he chooses the new, he reveals Christ. When he chooses the old, he exhibits his old ways. The more he can surrender to his new nature, the more he reveals His Lord. At death, praise God, he will be clothed only with the new nature which equips him to live with a Holy God!

"What would our lives be like if we forsook the old man completely, to live out the new?"

25. Every speck of falsehood would disappear from your speech and you'd speak only the

truth to everyone. And I mean all of you, for membership in the body of Christ produces the same working in each of us. 26. If you did get angry, it wouldn't be out of wounded pride or failure to control your feelings. Under no circumstances would you go to bed nursing a grievance against anyone. 27. Indulgence of that sort, gives the devil a real foothold. He'd like nothing better, for he easily has his way when passions smolder unchecked. And you don't want to give him any place in your life, none at all.



ANGER. Christians are not to get angry — period. Irrked feelings which linger, because someone has said or done something to you, are strictly forbidden (Matt. 5:21-26). Now it's true one sometimes feels indignation against injustice or for the sake of someone else, as did Jesus when He saw His Father's house perverted (John 2:14-17). Indeed He was furious, but not out of personal vengeance. Even indignation must not be allowed to smolder, for Satan can use that too. Reason behaves differently when one is upset. In the heat of a moment, a Christian can heed Satan's suggestion without realizing it. Our lives are dogged by this enemy. If our hearts are not tender and sweet toward others, they are wide open to satanic suggestion.

28. If you were a thief you would steal no more. Instead, you'd get a decent job and go to work with your hands, earning enough, perhaps, to help someone else in need. 29. Nothing hurtful or foul would be heard coming from your mouth, but only that which fits the situation and is something God can use to bless those who hear you. 30. In fact, you would be meticulous in guarding your thoughts and words so as not to hurt the Holy Spirit in any way. As you know, He is God's personal Seal guaranteeing your full redemp-

tion in that day.



HURT. God's Spirit is a Person, for only a person can be pained by a moral wrong. Not only is He our downpayment in kind on the future inheritance, He is also God's "ownership certificate" (Pink Slip) for His redeemed property. The Third Person of the Trinity is joined to us and forced to participate in anything we tolerate in our imaginations. Since He is Holy, any unholiness in us pains Him. Our love for the Beloved Indweller ought to be such that anything which hurts Him, hurts us too. The biggest changes occur in our lives when He becomes so real that we live just to please Him. This is a full time job, for He has come to dwell forever! (John 14:16).

"Say, you're talking about total abstinence from these things, aren't you!"

31. I don't want a trace of bitterness in any of you and that means complete temper control. Stop all quarreling at once and let's have no more harsh remarks or insults. In fact, there shouldn't even be a hint of spite between any of you. 32. Go the other way. Be kind to one another, and tenderhearted. Rush to forgive each other, even as God forgave you in Christ.



FORGAVE. Paul uses the aorist tense in the Greek to indicate this definite act in the past. It is not that God forgives or has forgiven — HE FORGAVE! We are totally pardoned in Christ! Since it is God's nature to forgive, and we have that nature, we ourselves must be ready with instant forgiveness. The sin of unforgiveness probably ranks higher than that of blasphemy, for it violates God's nature. Blasphemy is only an insult. The Glory of God is His mercy. If we would be the sons of our Father in heaven, this attribute must become the basis for our attitude toward others.

5 1. Therefore as beloved children become imitators of God, Who is a loving Person. 2. Devote yourselves to lov-

ing one another even as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. When we see that the offering of His life, which was so fragrant to God, resulted in the sacrifice of His body, we understand the kind of love it takes to please the Father.



IMITATORS. As children copy their parents, we are to imitate our God of love. Ah, but Whom do we imitate? Jesus — and by loving each other even to the point of sacrifice. Does a man tell his bruised thumb, "That's tough, you should be more careful?" No, he babys it with compassion. Similarly we are to look beyond denominations and individual faults to cherish every brother in Christ. We can afford to imitate God in this, for loving a brother amounts to cherishing ourselves. We are all one body in Christ.

"What else might grieve and hurt the Holy Spirit?"

3. Inasmuch as you are God's own, it is unthinkable that sexy gossip, acts of indecency or even notions of greed would be discussed among you. 4. Neither is it right for you to use filthy words, tell obscene stories or direct unclean remarks toward anyone. Your lips were designed to praise God. 5. You might as well know right now that anyone who is immoral, indecent or even covetous (which amounts to idol-worshipping), cannot expect to share in the Kingdom of Christ and God.



NO SHARE. Do Christians ever do things like this? Yes, even if only in their imaginations. Then do they forfeit heaven? Ah — here is the preciousness of the truth of the two natures. Which nature does the things cited

above? The old, of course. The new nature, Jesus' own, is righteous. Indeed, the old nature does not inherit a place in heaven. It drops off at physical death. Then why does Paul speak so? To show that such things belong to the old putrified life, that old nature which must be subdued daily. Not only do these things offend the Holy Spirit, but they will be reviewed at the Judgment Seat of Christ where Christians will render an account of their stewardship of this life (1 Cor. 4:5).

"Is every preacher expected to deal as severely with these things?"

6. Don't let anyone deceive you with trick words which suggest that some sin is to be expected in every life. God hates these things and they bring down His wrath on those who refuse to obey Him, because they prefer evil to His holiness. 7. You certainly don't want to be included with them. 8. True, you used to be in the dark about these things, because you were darkness yourselves. But now you have become light in the Lord and know better. Therefore live as children of the Light.



LIGHT. When Scripture says, "God is Light" it is featuring His absolute holiness (1 John 1:5). Contrariwise, sin is called darkness. At salvation we receive the holy, righteous nature of Jesus Who is the Light of the World. Possessing this new nature, the same moral perfection of God Himself, we thus become "light in the Lord." Can darkness approach light? No, it is dispelled by light. Consequently our old nature will never enter heaven. To live as the "Children of light," means to "turn on" Christ, or outlive this wonderful new nature.

9. The fruit of this light, that is, the outliving of your new nature, consists of nothing but goodness, righteousness and truth. 10. To exhibit the full effect of it, you must live only to please the Lord.



EXHIBIT. Having the new nature (light) and manifesting it (turning it on), are two different things. Having the holy nature of Jesus is no guarantee one will live a holy life — **only that he can!** The first requirement is a burning desire to please God and not yourself. Why? Self-pleasing "turns on" the old nature and produces darkness. The works of darkness are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit (Light). The degree to which a man surrenders himself to please the Lord, to that same degree he manifests his new nature — and displays Christ.

"But that isn't so easy when you're around unsaved people and they're behaving in an ungodly way!"

11. Don't let yourself become involved with people who obviously enjoy the sinful works of darkness. Instead, let your godly conduct expose their evil and be a rebuke to them.
12. Their doings are so shameful I can't mention the secret details here, but you know what I mean.
13. Does not everything become visible when exposed to light? Of course. And that's what your light does. It makes visible the true nature of their shameful ways and brings conviction.



REBUKE. This is not scolding. It is rebuke by difference. Your words and conduct are to be such that evil men behold the contrast. You may encounter situations on the job and around the office, but don't get involved — even by listening. Let your separated stand be seen and heard. If you have previously identified yourself as a Christian, they'll know why you withdraw yourself. People feel the separation. The Holy Spirit uses it to convict of sin. This is the reproof Paul means. Any word that identifies you as a Christian is sufficient to do the job, when you back it up by refusing to be party to shameful conversations.

14. This is the meaning of the Scripture

which says:

"Awake sleeping one,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ shall dawn upon thee," (Isa.
60:1).



DAWN. "Shine" would do as well in translation, but the imagery is that of the sun's first rays striking a man asleep. It's time to get up, for now he can see what is about him and go to work. In our case, the godly Christian ("Light in the Lord") is like those first rays. His witness "shines" on "sleeping" sinners around him. They could "arise" from their deadly slumber and come alive in Christ. Praise God for those Christians whose actions and words pierce the darkness about them to bring this life-giving light from the Lord!

"Hey, you're suggesting that every moment of our lives is critical!"

15. Watch out how you handle yourself in this world. If you're wise, you won't let time slip by you. That is foolish. 16. You shouldn't miss a single opportunity that arises through your being a "light" for Christ. In fact, you should "buy up" these opportunities, for they will not come to you automatically. The evil of our day opposes the Christian witness.



BUY UP. As a skillful merchant knows when to make an offer and buy out his competitor, so should the Christian learn how to create a Gospel opportunity at the right moment. This evil world is our competitor and not about to present us with automatic ways to exalt Christ. With Christ-honoring shrewdness we must turn daily events into witnessing situations. And the price? Watchfulness and preparation. Unless the child of God sets himself to "buy up" opportunities, days and years will go by with little done for Jesus. He counsels us to be as wise in serving Him, as are the schemers of the business world (Luke 16:8).

17. Because of your personal assignments in this world, you cannot afford to be so foolish as to forget why you are here. You should be constantly alert to God's will, looking for ways to make your time count.



ASSIGNMENTS. "Bondslave" was Paul's proudest title. Obeying the Commission his business. He slaved at it. Christians are blood-bought with 24 hours a day to live for self — or Jesus! It's a hard road from living for self, the condition at salvation, to using entire days for Christ. As the shrewd merchant tries to extract profit from each day, so should the Christian squeeze out all he can for Christ. Under orders to witness, he should exploit trips to the store, gas station, bank, etc., "buying up" opportunities to share the Lord. Until his time, money and energies are devoted to obedience daily, he cannot bear the title, "Slave of Christ." To squander a single day on self is foolish. It can't be made up — ever!

"That sounds like drudgery! Is there any excitement in serving Christ this way?"

18. Don't look to wine for your stimulation. That leads only in the direction of ruin. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Let Him exhilarate your soul and even the excess will be turned to joy in the Lord! 19. Then, as you speak to one another, the ecstasy will rise still higher. Your tongues will be loosed in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, rather than carousing. From the melody in your hearts, glad music will echo in the assembly.



BE FILLED. The imperative Greek verb makes this a command. We are to find all of our excitement in Christ, not in other stimulants, whether baseball or a bottle. Nothing can equal the thrill of serving Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit! Observe that the filling is connected with obedience. In every N.T. passage where people are filled, someone is also obeying Christ's command. Even

here the command to be filled follows Paul's instructions to make the most of our time by creating witnessing opportunities wherever possible. Obedience always brings blessing. Let a church move to sample this power, and the joy which follows can shake a city!

20. In everything give constant thanks to God, Who is also our Father. And do it in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the One Who has made this great joy possible.



THANKS. The Spirit-filled believer is never so excited he forgets where his joy originates. Someone else has made possible the thrills which come through obedience. It is all based on the sacrifice of his own dear Saviour. The Ephesians were encouraged to pray as they beheld the Almighty God as a **loving Father**. This was a new thing in a day when fierce, awesome gods dominated pitiful lives. The Name of Jesus is not a phrase tacked on to prayer, but the humble recognition that He Himself has opened the way for us to approach the Father. To pray in His Name means coming to the Father . . . "in Christ."

21. And let your tremendous awe of Christ, your reverential fear of displeasing Him in any way, motivate you to the point of respecting and being submissive to each other.



SUBMISSIVE. The filling of the Spirit is not limited to power, praise and joyous thanks. It is further seen in our behavior toward each other. If the blessing comes through submitting ourselves to our Master, still further blessing must come as we submit to each other. Paul would have us go so far as to "esteem others better than ourselves." Our voices should never be raised in bluster or self-vaunting as though we had special privilege in the Lord. There is always the danger that one who has sampled much of God's might and joy, may easily lord it over some brother who hasn't. Particularly is Paul anxious to apply this submissiveness to the marriage situation.

"Does Christian submission apply to marriage relationships as well?"

22. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.



OWN. This does not allude to someone else's husband nor does it hint at more than one husband. The Greek has a peculiar sense which asks the wife to behold her husband as **part of herself**. Paul will explain that later. "Submit," means she is to play a role. "As unto the Lord," means the Master is asking her to do this. To equip her for it, He has designed her differently from her husband, so that her completeness is to come as she follows rather than leads. No marriage can survive two leaders, so one partner must submit to the leadership of the other. However, unusual compensation accompanies the "submissive role," as Paul explains.

23. For the husband is the head to which a woman's body is joined, just as Christ is the Head of the church. Is not Jesus Himself the Saviour and Provider of His body the church?

24. While the husband is but a temporal saviour to his wife, nevertheless, in all things she is to manifest the same willing submission to him that the church owes to Christ.



HEAD. The obedience of the wife is profoundly a spiritual matter. It is because Jesus asks it that she dethrones her own will to install her husband as lord. The wife who can accept the truth of her spiritual nature (follower rather than leader), finds her greatest joy comes through submission. Insubordination of wives has always been a fertile source of marital sorrow. Paul says the wife's role is based on the church's relationship to Christ and therefore more noble than appears on the surface. We have to look deeper to find the glory of the woman in marriage.

"Doesn't this submission place a responsibility on the husband?"

25. Husbands love your wives even as Christ

loved the church and sacrificed Himself for her.



SACRIFICED. Far from a self-indulgent lord of the manor, the husband is called to be a self-forgetting servant. As Jesus went the limit in providing for His church, the husband sacrifices himself to provide a wondrous marriage climate where his wife can blossom in radiant glory. As Jesus is now preparing His bride, so the husband must bring his wife to perfection as she responds to his sacrificial love for her. When she submits to him, he becomes responsible before God for what she becomes under his reign of love. The wife responds as the husband tenderly cultivates her with love and affection. Can any wife fear to submit to a man who lives only to bring her to perfection — like Jesus! The husband is fully responsible for what his wife becomes in their marriage.

"Just how does Christ's sacrifice for His church relate to marriage?"

26. He sacrificed Himself to make her holy. Even now He is continually cleansing her at the laver of water, His Word.



LAVEN. This is O.T. imagery where blood and water are sharply distinguished types. Christ's blood, once and for all, makes the church His bride. The cleansing at the laver pictures the daily washing by His Word. The laver was used by the O.T. priests every time they served the Lord's altar. In the N.T., the cross is His altar, the laver His Word. Through the cross we are His forever, but it is His Word that cleanses from daily defilement. By His Word, the church is prepared for the great day when the marriage will be consummated in heaven. As Jesus has provided the Word for His church, so the husband makes daily provision for His wife, bringing her to the peak of joy and fruit bearing.

27. One day He will summon the church into His presence, where she will stand in all her splendor, free from every spot or wrinkle or any kind of disfigurement.



SPLENDOR. See now the three tenses of Jesus' work for His church: **Past:** He died to make her His. **Present:** continually protecting, providing and preparing her for glory. **Future:** presenting her to God at her radiant best. Applied to the husband this cancels any thought of the arrogant master. Her submission passes control to him, making him responsible for what she becomes. The more godly he is, the more glorious she becomes. The more considerate he is, the sooner she returns sacred affection. Yes, he denies himself for her, but is more than compensated by her happy care for all his needs. That is the thrill of marriage, also the glory of the church.

"You mean husbands are supposed to bring out the hidden glory of their wives!"

28. That is exactly how a husband is to love his wife — as if she were his own body. In so loving his wife, a man is actually loving himself. 29. Did you ever hear of anyone hating his own body? Certainly not. He cherishes it and preserves it, just as Christ does the church, which is His body. 30. And keep in mind that we are all members of that body.



CHERISHES. Here is the wife's compensation for submission. As Jesus is now bringing His church to glory, so must the godly husband live to bring out the spiritual graces of his wife. His lips are sealed against bitterness or sarcasm. He showers her with praise and affection. He sheds those careless habits which burden her, helps her when she's tired, comforts her when she's depressed, listens when she speaks and remembers her with gifts. He sees that she is properly adorned, refusing to squander her youth on drudgery. Does he not dress his own body to make it appealing, pampering it to perfection? The same is due his wife. She is his body too.

"Is it Scriptural to tie marriage so closely to Christ and the church?"

31. Does not the Scripture say: "For this

cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?" 32. There is an amazing truth in this which actually applies to Christ and His church.



TRUTH. Let your mind behold the wonder of God's Son leaving His Father's house to seek His bride! Shift now to earth where a man forsakes all others to join himself to a woman for life. Whom, though, does God forsake? Ah, the mystery opens. He forsakes all others! No more people will be created than those already purposed in Christ Jesus! God fell in love with a particular girl before the foundation of the world. Her name? The church. No others will be created, either in future plans or planets. He has **already** committed Himself to us alone! All of His eggs are in one basket, **He** wants no one else! He will cleave only to you and me **FOREVER!** Earthly marriage hints of this when it joins one man to one woman for life!

"But I thought that verse applied to earthly marriage."

33. However, since that quote applies specifically to you, see to it that every husband loves his wife as himself and every wife reverently submits to her husband.



SEE TO IT. In heaven you and I will live exclusively for one person — Jesus. On earth we learn how. Where? In the laboratory of marriage. Oh the genius of the marriage scheme! Behold a head and a body, what a glorious relationship! See also the two sexes with their different emotional qualities. Either is imperfect by itself. The aggressive male requires the responsive female. See then the built-in device that reminds us how incomplete we are without each other. Male and female answer to head and body wedded in such an affectionate adjustment the line which separates them is lost from view. The truest unity is a conjugal duality, "one soul in two bodies." Christian mates are learning to live for each other now in preparation for a day when they will live only for Jesus. It takes a little doing to get ready. Marriage teaches us how.

6 1. Children, you must obey your parents. Doing so is an act of righteousness on your part, for the Lord has set them over you. 2. Of the Ten Commandments, the first to be accompanied by a promise is "Honor your father and your mother." 3. And what is the accompanying promise? "That all may go well with you and you will live to a ripe old age."



OBEY. This word is very strict in the Greek, stronger than the one referring to the wife's obedience above. Here is unquestioned, unreasoning, implicit obedience. "In the Lord," continues Paul's thought of the home where loving parents provide a Christian environment. God accepts a child's obedience to his parents as He accepts the wife's submission to her husband. Children, learning to submit at home, adjust well to governmental authority and graduate to God's rule over them. Submission, rather than self-assertion, lets us skirt many serious problems. It is always better to roll with punches than absorb them. The stiff-necked rebel usually finds life hard and doesn't last long. Submission brings reduced anxieties, permitting one to live better, happier and longer.

"Whom does God hold responsible for the children's spiritual development?"

4. You fathers are not to handle your children unreasonably or unjustly so as to kindle resentment. That destroys their respect for parental authority. Instead, discipline them with work and admonish them with words, using such punishments and rewards as you think the Lord would approve.



FATHERS. Since the mothers are submitting to their husbands, the fathers become fully responsible for the cultivation of the children. This in no wise restricts the mother's rights or influence. It simply reminds fathers they carry the full load as far as God is concerned. Often prone to passion and over-indulgence with the children,

they are the ones needing this reminder. "Discipline," in the Greek has to do with teaching responsibility, using punishments as needed. The word "admonish," refers to counsel and exhortations leading to their improvement. The child-like obedience God desires is easier gained if first learned at home. Indifferent fathers will have much to account for at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

"Does this submissive spirit apply to other household relationships?"

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5. Servants (employees), give your masters (employers) the same obedience you owe to Christ and do it with sacred anxiety, the very yearning with which you long to please God.

6. Avoid giving the kind of service which is done only when the boss is looking, for that reduces you to a man-pleaser. Work with all your heart as though you were serving only the Lord, for you are, indeed, His slave.

7. In that way you will become a cheerful slave (employee), for all of your work is as unto the Lord rather than men. 8. You can do this, for it is the Lord who finally pays us for our good service, whether we are working for someone or not.



SERVANTS. Regardless of treatment or pay, the Christian slave was to perform his tasks as unto the Lord. Paul thinks of the Roman soldier receiving only room and board while on active duty, collecting the balance when mustered out. The Christian, working unto the Lord, collected the pittance from his owner with the balance awaiting him in glory. Today's Christian employee may do the same. Regardless of wages or conditions, he can sing all day knowing his Boss will one day give him the balance of his pay. The context of this passage is the home. A man's slaves were always with him no matter how he used them. Hence they too came within the Christian love-climate and were to be affected by it.

9. And you masters (employers), you must behave the same toward your servants (employees). Were you called to threaten them? Threats are taboo since their real Master is also your Master. He treats everyone the same inasmuch as He has no regard for man-made ranks and distinctions.



MASTERS. Since earthly titles have no weight with God, servants are equal with masters. They are brothers in God's sight. If slaves must forbear complaints against their masters, masters must forbear threats against their slaves. As the wife looks to the husband for blessing, so may the slave look to his Christian master. He stands in God's place of authority and under obligation to bring out the best in them, even as he does his children. Today's Christian employers inherit these instructions. The way a man fulfills his role on earth, whether boss or employee, determines his role in glory. The doctrine of Christian reward is vital to the interpretation of this passage.

"With such wealth in Christ and your clear instructions, it ought to be easy to live godly, right!"

10. From this point on, determine to develop your strength in the Lord. In addition, learn to rely on His might to the place where it actually becomes your power.



THIS POINT. The oldest Mss. read, "From henceforth," indicating Paul's letter is climaxing. Our contest with Satan brings Ephesians to its zenith. God's call is not only to the glories of the earlier chapters, but to active duty. We are involved in a warfare. A man can momentarily forget his wealth with an enemy staring him in the face. Before describing the military side of the Christian life, Paul mentions two devotional requirements. (1) "Develop your strength," i.e., learning to trust Jesus more and more and depend on His Word. (2) "His might"—familiarity with the Holy Spirit to the point of doing things in His strength, viz.,

enjoying convicting power as you speak to lost souls. These two different strengths are needed prior to taking up arms.

EPH

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11. In addition, arm yourselves with every spiritual weapon in God's arsenal, so that you may be able to encounter and survive the cunning assaults and stratagems of the devil.



DEVIL. Many smile at the mention of Satan, blind to his hold on the modern church and devastation of Christian lives. Paul respected his power. Until we learn how to use our spiritual weapons against him, we remain his easy victims. Millions of unchanged lives certify this bitter fact. See that this warfare is not against sin and temptation, but against a **person, the tempter!** This supernatural god is extremely clever with instant access to our minds. Prayer and Bible study are futile now, for they are Godward and devotional. Satanward action is needed which is vicious and destructive, inflicting great damage as we use God's weapon in Jesus' Name. This is the military side of the Christian life and it is not nice.

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"You mean we actually fight against this person, Satan!"

12. Our fight is not with flesh and blood people, or anything human and physical. We're struggling with an unseen empire of highly organized satanic beings. Arrayed against us is a kingdom of evil rulers who control the darkness of this world. There are dignitaries in command of entire armies of evil spirits who cannot be perceived by our senses since they operate in the spirit-world.



SPIRIT-WORLD. Huge satanic forces move against the saints. They are unseen, occupying a sphere which corresponds to their nature, just as earth and air corresponds to ours. This does not make them any the less

real, but it does make fleshly weapons useless. Behind all that is destructive and sinful in this world, Paul sees an evil armada with its commanding general, Satan. Since they are not physical, they do not attack us physically. The battleground is in the spirit, that is, the realm of our thought-life and suggestion. Consequently the weapons we must use against them are all mental, such as Paul lists below.

13. Therefore equip yourselves with all the available armor of God, right now! The day approaches when you will stand toe to toe with your enemy, and when it is all over, you want to be found still on your feet.



EQUIP. Paul commands the use of arms against Satan. There is no automatic defense, though some read it into "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Jesus' indwelling presence is a **RESOURCE**, not a victory. It is because of His presence we dare to fight. What is the coming day? Assuredly the first time we try out our arms. It is a crisis to face Satan head on for the first time and put James 4:7 to the test. Salvation is not at issue here, for a Christian may suffer numerous defeats before he finally learns how to use his weapons in the power of the Spirit. It is urgent to see that we are under orders to prepare ourselves and gain skill in dealing with the devil!

"Could you be more specific as to the nature of our weapons?"

14. In holding your ground, use truth as your loin-belt and righteousness as your breastplate.

15. Preparation in the Gospel of peace becomes your war-sandals. 16. Your faith shield is most important for it quenches the fire-tipped arrows of your wicked enemy.

17. Your salvation experience, which brings an awareness of Jesus' indwelling presence, can serve as the helmet and God's Word is your Spirit-anointed Sword.



WEAPONS. Paul's Ephesians readily understood his Roman Battledress illustration, but it is easier for us to speak of mental war. Truth, faith, peace, etc., are choice weapons on the battlefield of the mind. Paul has now passed to the military side of the Christian life: (1) "Arm yourselves"—learn the truths of Satan, i.e., who he is and how he operates as well as acquire techniques for resisting him. (2) "Sword"—we are to FIGHT!—God's supernatural Word is also a damaging weapon. **Weapons are used on enemies.** Here the Bible is applied in the power of the Spirit (just as in preaching or witnessing) to the vile heart of Satan. Toward God it is used devotionally, toward Satan, viciously and destructively—and he flees!

"Where does prayer fit into this warfare!"

18. Of course you face Satan in a prayerful attitude, knowing that resisting him is impossible apart from God's strength. Stay alert. Even as you watch every situation that develops around you, keep in constant touch with Him. Be equally persistent when it comes to asking God in behalf of all His people.



PRAYERFUL. Observe that prayer is **NOT** part of the armor. Prayer is Godward, not directed against the enemy. Yet the armor is useless in our own strength. Even as we speak to Satan, we simultaneously ask God to anoint the Word to his blasphemous heart. Unless we meet Satan prayerfully, it is easy to slip out of the spirit and into the flesh. Meeting him in the flesh is a joke, he rules the flesh. Prayer humbles us, restraining any arrogant blasts. Paul enjoins prayer for the brethren, particularly that they might become aware of the need for action against Satan.

19. And remember me also, won't you? Particularly that I might be able to broadcast the news that salvation is now available to the Gentiles. 20. For though I am in chains, I am still an ambassador of that Gospel. Therefore pray that I might be bold to speak as I should.



I SHOULD. Paul knew that behind his chains, evil forces were at work hindering the Gospel. Aware of the Spirit's mighty power, he believed prison walls should be no barrier. He is asking the saints to pray for wisdom and boldness, such as would allow his prison to become a pulpit. To one accustomed to moving in heaven's power, chains and guards were a small matter. Taking note of Paul's prison letters and their great contribution to the faith, we see those prayers answered. This one, Ephesians, is the capstone of the N.T. This great man did not stand alone. Even his wonderful ministry depended on the prayers of others.

"Speaking of bonds, how are things with you as of this moment!"

21. If you wish to learn more of my circumstances and how things are going at this end, you can ask Tychicus, that faithful servant and my beloved brother. 22. I am sending him to you so that you may know how we're doing and to cheer your hearts with his encouragement.

"Thank you, brother Paul, for this wonderful message. May we also have your blessing!"

23. **PEACE** to all the brethren, that peace which comes when you add love to the faith you have received from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24. May His **GRACE** be at work in the lives of all of you who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an unshakeable love.



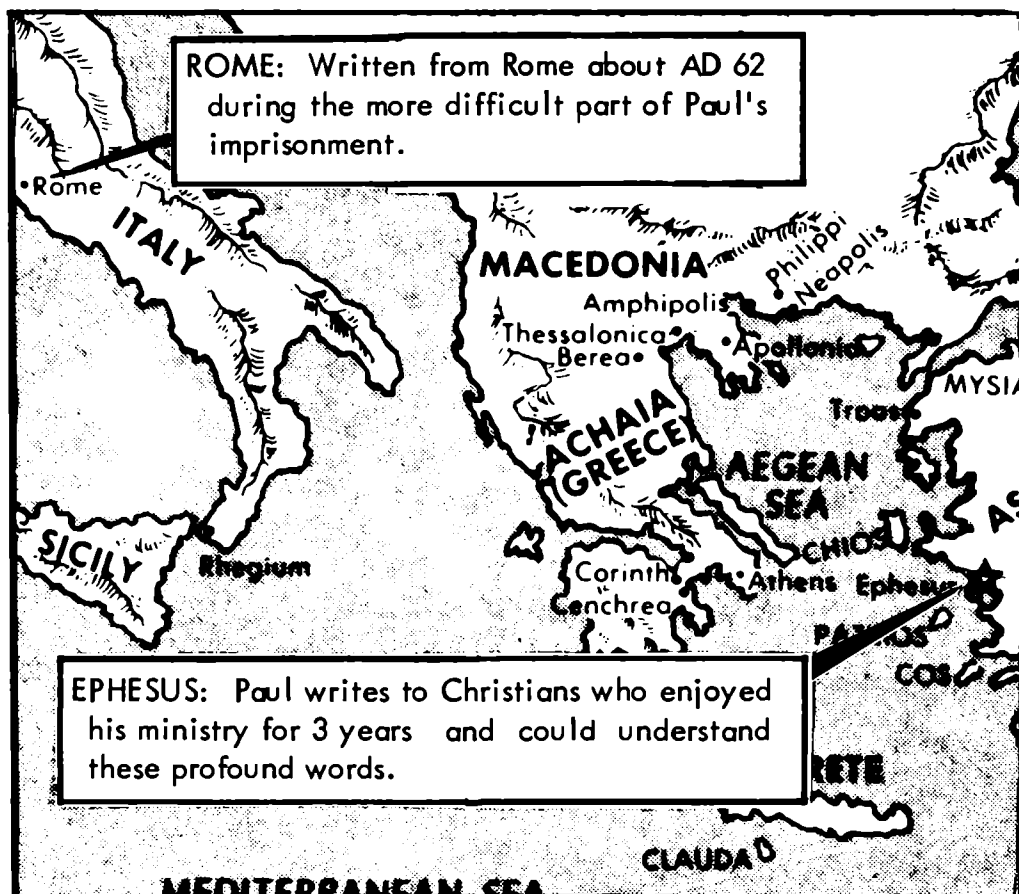
BENEDICTION. Paul did not write his letters, but dictated them, always penning the close with his own hand. See how his final thoughts are for the body of Christ? He pictures them as loving each other and behaving graciously toward each other, thus producing a lovely temple for the Lord. He would have us consider that the opinions which divide brethren today are really quite small when compared with all we share in Christ. With so much in common,

how can we be at odds with one another? Since we will be spending eternity together, ought we not to commence the eternal fellowship even now? Wherever there is a true believer in Christ Jesus, I have a dear brother!

Amen? Amen!

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PHILIPPIANS



HIGHER
GROUND FOR
CHRISTIANS



ROME'S PRISON—
PAUL'S PULPIT

PHIL Intro

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This letter was written to already dedicated, sacrificing Christians. The enthusiastic Philippian church was almost perfect, yet Paul asked for even greater maturity. He observed for them that increased self-denial and deeper humility would earn them a fantastic exaltation. This rephrased edition of his letter invites today's Christian to put himself in the place of the Philippians and accept Paul's challenge.

The "Mirror-Method of Maturity" can be your experience as you see yourself in God's Word and give heed to Paul's counsel concerning the "race" in Christ. Humility, self-sacrifice, thought-control and indifference to worldly attractions make up the ground rules for those who want to WIN! Do you yearn to reach "higher ground" in Christ? Then winning the race will have to become the "one thing" of your life. You'll love the MIRROR-METHOD for the inserted questions and amplifying comments help to show the race course most clearly.

—C. S. Lovett

PHILIPPIANS

1 1. Paul and Timothy, the bondslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the true believers in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, together with the pastors and deacons, 2. may God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.



BONDSLAVES. In N.T. times slaves were called by their master's name. Jesus' followers were first called "Christians" at Antioch. The practice began as a nickname, but the name stuck. "Christianoi," or "slaves of Christ," became the title of Jesus' disciples. The early Christians didn't mind the lowly estate and loss of pride this title earned, for they awaited a day when they would enter into their Master's own glory. Though Paul frequently had to defend his apostleship, he preferred thinking of himself as Jesus' slave!

3. Every time I think of you I'm compelled to thank God for you all. 4. Each time I pray for you it is a joyous experience, 5. for I am reminded of the way you have helped me get out the Gospel from the very first, right up to this moment. 6. Now I am satisfied that He who has ignited this Gospel passion within you, will see that it continues to burn until the day of Christ Jesus. I am fully persuaded that He will finish the task so firmly laid on your hearts.

"How can you be convinced of what God is likely to perform in someone else?"

7. I know it is right for me to have this confidence in you, simply because of the way

you are rooted in my heart. Also I am aware that you share my joy of being able to declare the Gospel even though a prisoner. 8. God is witness to the way I long for you all with the very tenderness of Christ Jesus Himself. His love at work in me inspires this confidence I have in you.



PARTICIPATION. Paul was obsessed with the idea of exalting Christ and spreading the Gospel. Anyone sharing this ambition earned his love and gratitude. The newly arrived gift of money from Philippi, designated to help spread the Gospel, triggered an out-burst of affection. After ten years of their faithfulness, he is now certain that their Gospel vision will persist until the Day of Christ. He sensed that the Philippians' grace of giving would abide until the Lord returned. All the N.T. writers expected Jesus to return shortly.

9. Now this is what I pray for you: that your love will increase steadily, but along with it, greater knowledge and keener discernment. 10. This way you will be able to choose the more excellent things of life and remain pure and blameless until the day Christ returns. 11. Then you will reap the full harvest that follows a life lived for Christ Jesus to the glory and praise of God.



CHRISTIAN PASSION. Paul knew by experience what misdirected zeal could do. His own passion for Israel, once caused him to persecute the church he now loves. Lack of discernment and true knowledge formerly made him a savage opponent of Jesus. Consequently he prays for these graces to be found in his beloved Philippians. Today, Christians can be found zealously contending for doctrines which divide the brethren, whereas discernment of this evil would cause many to subordinate their differences in the common cause of exalting Jesus.

12. Brethren it is important that you understand that what has happened to me has definitely advanced the Gospel. 13. It is well known by the entire palace guard and a host of others that my shackles are because of Christ. 14. Further, a majority of the brethren here have derived fresh confidence in the Lord as a result of my imprisonment and are boldly preaching God's Word with more fervor than ever.



GUARDS were chained to Paul. Each day, one of Nero's elite, praetorian bodyguards had the experience of being harnessed to this fanatic and exposed to his Gospel. The prison became a pulpit. Word spread like wildfire. After three years, the natural rotation of Nero's soldiers carried the story all over the empire. Paul's boldness in bonds so thrilled the Roman Christians, many were challenged to declare Christ more openly.

"Wouldn't this tend to aggravate your situation?"

15. It's true that some here preach Christ because they are jealous of me and don't care if they cause trouble. But there are others who proclaim Him simply because they are eagerly disposed to do so. 16. These do it out of love, for they know God has given me the task of defending the Gospel. 17. The others, of course, are insincere. They would like to add to my bonds by preaching Christ.



JEALOUSY. As is true today, Rome too had a collection of self-seeking, jealous Christians. They were happy to enhance their own reputations at Paul's expense. Jealous of his results, they sought to capitalize on them, think-

ing he would be blamed since he was already confined as the chief Gospel instigator. Instead of intensifying the charges, this served to weaken them. With so many preachers going about, full blame could not be laid against Paul. This led to his subsequent release.

PHIL 1

18. But what of that? I'm happy about it. Just so Christ is preached is all that matters, whether from a pure motive or a false one. I am actually glad about this and I'll continue to be glad, I'm sure.

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"Wouldn't you rather be out of jail to preach more freely!"

19. I expect to be freed. With Christ being preached as He is, with you to pray for me, plus the working I behold of the Spirit of Christ Jesus, I know my welfare is being advanced. I am prospering. 20. Even so, it is my deepest yearning and desire never to disgrace myself in His service. I am determined now and from here on to exalt Christ conspicuously and honor Him in my body, whether that means through continued life or a martyr's death. 21. What else is there? Nothing. Life, as far as I am concerned, is Christ. Dying will only make me richer.



DEATH-RICHER. This was written at a time, humanly speaking, when the outcome of the apostle's trial was suspenseful and uncertain. He had lived in the shadow of execution (death row) for 3 years, but now the Philippians' gift appeared as evidence that God had further work for him. However, should death be his lot, he wanted to die joyously exhibiting the Saviour's indwelling power! To glorify Jesus in a radiant, triumphant death, would add the final jewel to Paul's treasure laid up in Christ.

"Surely you'd rather live to preach than die, wouldn't you?"

22. If continuing in this body means I can do more for Christ, then certainly it is worthwhile. But I find it hard for me to decide which is better. 23. I am torn between two wonderful opportunities. I long to be done with this life and be with Christ, which is obviously better, 24. however, it is more important for your sakes that I continue to live among you. 25. That's what settles it in my mind. I know now that I will stay. I will remain with you a little longer and continue to help all of you advance in the faith. 26. Besides, I want you to have all the joy your precious faith deserves. And you shall have it when I come to you again. Then we will rejoice more than ever in Christ Jesus.



REJOICE. Their gift brought Paul overwhelming joy. He rejoiced that their Gospel vision had not dimmed. Now he would return that joy by coming to them so that they might behold the answer to their prayers in person. His first deliverance from the Philippian jail 10 years before gave this church a supernatural beginning. His second deliverance was now to bring them a supernatural boost in the faith.

"What kind of advance do you have in mind for the Philippians?"

27. Since my sole purpose for remaining on earth is your progress in the faith, I want you to see to it that your lives square up with the Gospel of Christ. Then, whether I am able to come and see you or not, the reports reaching me will indicate that you are standing firm in one spirit, cooperating perfectly with one

another and working in lovely harmony for the Gospel's sake. 28. Further — never do I want you to show any fear of your enemies. Such fearlessness, you see, comes from God. Hence it is a sign to them of their defeat, but to you it is an evidence of your salvation.



FEARLESSNESS. This is not to be confused with dying grace which comes in the final moments of life, but fearless determination to press the claims of Christ in the face of opposition. It is a strength that does not come overnight, but rather through purposing to be a more vigorous witness for Jesus today than you were yesterday. After 10 years, he expected the Philippians to display such fearlessness. Having been so intimately involved with Paul in the cause of Christ, retreat in the face of any anti-Christian spirit was now unthinkable.

"Oh, were the Philippians to expect enemies?"

29. You will have enemies in the Gospel, for you have been given the privilege not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake. Yet, if you will take note of what has happened to me, you'll see that the power to meet and absorb suffering is a part of that grant. 30. You are already involved in the fight in which you have seen me engaged, yes and more particularly in the struggle which I am having right now.



ENEMIES. The Philippian church seems to have been relatively free of enemies, particularly the Judaizers. But that freedom is about to end as Paul's enemies can be expected to follow him from Rome. Also the persecutions under Nero (A.D. 64) would be under way. Satan could not be expected to ignore this "good work" indefinitely. Thus Paul prepares them for vicious opposition.

2 1. If I may now exhort you in Christ, my love for you providing the needed encouragement; and since there is already a sweet bond of fellowship among you as well as the tender compassion you show toward me, 2. go on and fulfill what is missing from my joy by working together in determined harmony, yoked by your common love for Jesus with only one purpose in mind as you set your hearts upon our one objective.



MISSING. Paul was proud of his Philippians. Their dedication thrilled him. This was almost a flawless church, but he would have his continued stay on earth result in their further progress in the faith. Complete unity, wrought through humility, would be higher ground. It would add to the apostle's joy if they could reach it.

3. Don't let party loyalty or selfish ambition move you to any act. On the contrary, inhibit all strife and self-exaltation by humbling yourselves — even to the point of regarding others superior to yourselves. 4. Look out for each other's interests, not just your own.



HUMILITY. Would a Democratic candidate extoll the virtues of his Republican opponent or vice versa? Hardly. It is not the way of the world. Humility is the precious root from which godly virtues shoot. Seeking out what is superior to yourself in someone else, is the first step. Then to advance that person's interest at your own expense is higher still. This is unheard of today when Christian workers seemingly vie with each other for stature in the ministry.

"Won't men take advantage of someone who lives like that?"

5. The attitude you should have is the same which Jesus had. 6. Even though He had

always existed as the Eternal God, He did not consider the RANK OF GOD-HEAD something He had to hang on to. 7. Instead, He laid aside the heavenly uniform, demoting Himself to the RANK OF BONDSLAVE and appeared in the uniform of men. 8. Thus He dispossessed Himself of His heavenly estate to participate in human experience in a body. As a man, His obedience took Him to His death — the death of the cross.



DEITY. In essence Jesus was and is God. His humiliation was not a discard of Deity, for then He would have ceased to exist. Jesus divested Himself only of the outward glory of The Deity, so as to reveal the inner (moral) glory of God through the human nature. It was the God of Glory, minus His external majesty, that entered the human stream in Bethlehem. He was completely man, with every limitation of the flesh, yet fully God with respect to essence and identification.

"Then He had to earn back His glory as a man, right?"

9. That is why God raised Him to such heights, giving Him a Name that outranks every other name, 10. so that at the mention of the Name of Jesus, all beings kneel, whether in heaven, on earth or in the underworld. 11. And likewise that every tongue should proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father.



GLORY. It was the MAN Christ Jesus who was so exalted. It was not the God of Glory resuming His former estate. Jesus earned this exaltation through humility and obedience. Christians beholding the selflessness of Jesus see their own Creator renounce His reputation and sacrifice His own interests for them. They are encouraged to follow His

example when they see what fantastic glory it brings. Cannot one endure as a private, when a day is coming when he will be exalted to generalship? Humility is the road to glory.

"Can we do that to achieve a similar glory!"

12. So then my beloved friends, as you have always obeyed when I was with you, it is even more important that you do this while I am away. I want you to exploit your salvation opportunity, working it out to its logical goal, the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. And do it with the fearful determination of a servant who trembles at the thought of displeasing his master.



SALVATION WORKOUT. A math problem has but one conclusion, so does salvation. It takes daily exercise, workouts, for a Christian to reach his potential in Christ. Paul finds it our human responsibility to squeeze the most from one's salvation experience, vis., a baseball pitcher developing the latent possibilities of his arm via daily workouts. Since no one else can do this for us, the Philippians were to "paddle their own canoe," i.e., advance in Christ, in Paul's absence.

"How is it possible to 'work out your own salvation!' "

13. It is possible to do this for God is pleased to work in you graciously supplying the impulse to be willing plus the strength to do His will.



NO EXCUSE. Human responsibility is answered by God's indwelling Spirit who makes possible our advance in Christ. Flowers appear after the sun has warmed the earth, causing seeds to germinate and send forth roots. We respond to the wooing of the Spirit as He coaxes our willingness and supplies the strength when we act. We never wait on God for this, for His part is simply to help as we press toward Christlikeness.

14. Therefore do all things without secret

complaints about your circumstances or profitless disputations with each other, for these flow from vanity, 15. all to the end that you may live as the innocent children of God, free from the inclination to do mischief to anyone, hesitating to bring the slightest reproach upon His Name. Since we live in a wicked and distorted generation, you will stand out like bursting flares in the sky, 16. as you offer the Word of life to others. Do this and when the Day of Christ arrives, I will be proud of you and able to boast that my time invested in you was not wasted.



FLARES. It is not the living of a good life that makes the Christian stand out, but his offering of the Word to others. Christians cannot be distinguished from the do-gooders by the way they live. They are exploding flares only as they present the invitation of Christ. The silent Christian gives off no light at all, but who can miss that aggressive witness who walks humbly and is free of a contentious spirit?

"But suppose you're not released from prison! What then!"

17. Now should it turn out that my blood is yet to be spilled, then consider it a libation upon the sacrifice you are making to God with your faithful lives. If it does happen, I would congratulate myself and you all. 18. Similarly, I would expect you to feel the same and congratulate yourselves and me. You must not be dismayed by my entrance into glory.



LIBATION. Paul refers to an ancient custom where a drink offering was poured upon the altar **after** a sacrifice was completed. This added gesture was to indicate that the sacrifice was made from an abundant heart. The apostle's great humility is revealed as he pictures

himself the libation for the Philippians' sacrifice, inasmuch as the lesser part is poured out upon the more important part.

19. I am hoping in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so I can be cheered with news of you when he returns. 20. He is the only one here who shares my feelings for you and is genuinely interested in all that concerns you. 21. The rest apparently have their own interests at heart and not Christ's. 22. You know how well-tested he is, having shared my task in the Gospel like a son working with his father. 23. As soon as I see how things are going to turn out for me here, I plan to send him to you. 24. Also, I trust in the Lord, that I myself will be able to come to you shortly.



CONTRAST. Paul has just discounted his own importance, calling himself a mere libation. Now he cites Timothy as an example of the Christ-attitude. But others are not like this! Why? They care only for their own interests. They do not have the MIND of Christ. Epaphroditus further typifies the selflessness which should characterize Jesus' servants.

25. Meanwhile, I've decided it is necessary to send Epaphroditus to you. He is like a brother to me, my companion in labor, my comrade in battle besides being the messenger you yourselves sent to minister to my needs. 26. He longs greatly to see you and is worried that you might have heard that he was ill. 27. Ill he was, close to dying, but God had pity on him. And not on him only, but on me too, lest his passing compound my sorrows. 28. Therefore I am the more eager to send him to you that you may have the

joy of seeing him, and I will be delivered of the anxiety. 29. You will give him a rousing welcome in the Lord, won't you? And be sure to honor such a man. 30. For he risked his life and nearly died serving the Lord trying to make up the one thing all your kindness lacked.



LACKED. Paul doesn't mean to imply that anything was missing from their gift or that they lacked the will to do for him. To the contrary, they lacked opportunity only — and that by reason of distance. Had they been closer, they would have ministered to him often as they had done before (4:10, 16). As it was, this leader in the Philippian church had to leave his people and come that great distance, nearly forfeiting his life in the process. Observe the anxiety of Paul. A healer, he was unable to heal this man.

"How would Satan go about attacking this church?"

3 1. Furthermore, my brethren, rejoice **IN THE LORD!** It doesn't bother me to repeat that, besides it is necessary for your safety. There are those who would dilute your faith in Him. 2. Beware of those filthy dogs, those mutilating corruptors who peddle the Gospel but claim that circumcision is necessary for salvation. Watch out for them, their teaching is fatal!



DOGS. Paul's fierce words here (in contrast to his tenderness toward the Philippians) denounce the Judaizers. They believed Jesus was the Messiah of Israel only — that Gentiles could be saved only by entering Judaism via circumcision, then to embrace Christ as Saviour. They used tradition and Scripture to show that "flesh-cutting" was the ground of justification. Soon they would be attacking this lovely church, hence this stern warning to keep their faith centered "in the Lord."

"But ceremonies do have a place, don't they!"

3. We who worship God in the Spirit are the truly circumcised. Our exultation comes through trusting in Jesus alone with no confidence in external ceremonies. 4. If anyone could have confidence in formalism, it would be myself. When it comes to outward observances, I have more to my credit than anyone else.



CIRCUMCISION. By this time the ancient Jewish rite had lost its significance. God was no longer to be approached through outward ceremonies, but through the Holy Spirit alone (John 4:24). He who worships God in the Spirit already has that "circumcision of the heart," which answers to the rite performed in the flesh (Rom. 2:29). Paul disavows any outward act as a basis for justification.

5. I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a natural-born Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin. And since both of my parents were Hebrews, I am a pure-blood Jew. As far as keeping the Law is concerned, I am a strict Pharisee. 6. The measure of my zeal is demonstrated by my persecution of the church. Further, I have met every requirement for righteousness under the Law. I am legally perfect.

"Doesn't this rich background mean a lot to you!"

7. But all this, which I once considered as standing to my credit, I write off as a total loss when it comes to salvation in Christ. 8. For that matter, there isn't anything in

this world which can be compared with the priceless worth of intimacy with Christ Jesus my Lord. I have already sacrificed all that I am and have, tossing it aside as trash, for the surpassing experience of loving Him and receiving Him.

9. I want all to observe that I have disassociated myself from any kind of self-justification under the Law. For I now have God's own righteousness, which He has given me on the basis of my faith in Christ alone.



FAITH ALONE. Ceremonialism can be deadly when some physical act is performed in the hope of earning personal merit in God's sight. The "Christian" who allows his faith to be mixed with some act of the flesh and then presented to God for salvation, is in great danger. Those teaching such a thing fall under Paul's anathema, "Let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). While circumcision threatened the NT churches, there are other ceremonial acts threatening believers today.

10. I now seek an increasing awareness of His presence in my life. I want to experience more of His resurrection power as I endure deeper suffering for His sake. I long to approach His obedience unto death. Why?

11. So that I too might attain unto an out-resurrection from among the dead like His!



OUT-RESURRECTION. This strange Greek word signifies a special resurrection unto glory. Jesus' fantastic exaltation, where every knee bows at the mention of His Name, came as the result of a life of total obedience. Paul yearns for a similar experience, knowing that the degree to which he shares Christ's suffering (through obedience), is the same degree to which he will also participate in Christ's exalted Glory. God's program is clearly that of suffering first and the glory which follows.

"Aren't you already sure of your portion in Christ?"

12. Please don't think that I have earned such an exaltation already. Indeed not, for that would mean I have reached a perfection beyond which no further progress is possible. But I yearn to reach it, for Christ has shown me how far a man can go! 13. No my brothers, you mustn't think of me as the ultimate Christian. I too am in the race with only one thing in mind — winning! I forget everything behind me as I concentrate on the goal ahead. 14. I stretch myself, straining to win the prize — God's invitation to share in Christ's glory!



ONE THING. Runners in training are separated from things ordinarily proper in their place, but which prevent one from running his best. Christians must deny themselves many choice things of this life which are all right in their place, but interfere with reaching the prize. Once committed to Jesus, we are to be swept up in the thrill and excitement of reaching for maturity. Nothing — neither family, job, reputation nor money, is to keep us from witnessing and growing in Christ-likeness. Becoming a "one-thing Christian" — winning the race — outweighs all else in life.

"Are you asking us to become 'one-thing' Christians too!"

15. All who are truly competing in this race should have this same attitude. However, should any of you have a different idea as to how to reach the goal, God will show you His will in that also. 16. The important thing is that we have come this far together. Let's go on together.

17. Be content, my brethren, to follow my example and use it as a standard by which to

note those who are true followers. 18. As I have said so often and weep as I say it now, there are many whose lives (in spite of their words) indicate they detest the cross of Christ. 19. Hell awaits these people for their god is their own flesh, not Jesus. That which they regard as glorious, is really shame. Their interest is fixed on the things of this life only. They want no part of the cross-bearing life.



BELLY GOD. The Philippians were faced with not only the Judaizers, but the Epicureans. The latter believed a man should live as well as possible. And they urged Christians to enjoy the best of this life even while seeking to follow Christ. Of course it was a deadly teaching, for the moment a man tried it, his focus moved from Christ to self. This error is rife today, particularly in our rich land which is bent on providing its citizens with the best of everything life has to offer. "One-thing" Christians must ignore the yearnings of their own flesh to take advantage of this fact.

"Hey, aren't we supposed to enjoy the good things of God's creation?"

20. We, on the other hand, are citizens of a commonwealth whose capitol is in heaven. It is from there that we anticipate the return of our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, 21. Who, when He comes, will transform the body we are now wearing, during this time of our humiliation, so that it will conform to the body He will be wearing when He comes in glory. And He will do it simply by means of His ability to make anything obey His orders.



HUMILIATION BODIES. Even as Jesus' identification was concealed beneath the uniform of men, so is the fact that we are now the sons of God veiled by our earthly bodies. This is the time of our humiliation

also. On that day when Christ appears, we will appear with Him also and look just like Him. Our bodies of humiliation will be instantly changed into ones of glory like His (1st John 3:2). This is why we must ignore the cries of our flesh and spurn the goodies of this world — a new glory and satisfaction awaits! The transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17) offers a peek at our glorified body.

4 1. So then my brothers, greatly loved and longed for; you who are my joy in this life and my crown in the next—**STAND FIRM**—in the Lord!

2. Euodia, please. Syntyche, I beg of you—yield your differences. Agree as sisters in the Lord. 3. And you, my faithful partner, see if you can't help these women who have worked so hard to help me spread the Gospel. For they have done as much as Clement or any of the rest whose names are in the book of life. 4. I want you all to joy in the Lord continually, yea even more—to rejoice!



WOMEN. Macedonian women enjoyed an unusually high place in social life and a disagreement between two of them in the Philippian church gave rise to one of the greatest Christological passages in the N.T. Paul cites the example of Jesus' descent to humiliation (2:5-8) as a means of exhorting them to a similar attitude. He further assigns an unnamed friend the delicate task of bringing them to this "one thing," with the hope of producing a bond of peace that would enable them to reach the higher ground.

5. Let your forbearance, your willingness to accept less than your due, become a testimony to all inasmuch as the Lord is at hand.



NEARNESS. Paul would have the nearness of the Lord, both in His expected physical return and His immediateness in the Spirit, be the center of their focus. Experience had taught him that eyes set on people, theologies and circumstances, can soon disquiet any heart. It is as we look to Jesus alone that our hearts become stabilized. In that he was chained to a soldier as he wrote, he was speaking from experience, not theology.

"How can one forbear a hard situation and rejoice at the same time!"

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6. Don't worry about a single thing. No matter what the circumstance, commit it to God. Ask Him for what you need, but be most careful to thank Him for all that is taking place.



FORMULA. (1) Commit the circumstances to God, (2) Specific prayer for needs as you see them, (3) Give thanks for every event. That is the formula for a worry-free life. Giving thanks is the urgent part. If we fail to thank God for what He is doing, why should He do more? We do not ask the pharmacist to delete parts of a prescription, we take all or none. Neither can we select elements of God's formula. Committing and asking are vital, but thanksgiving is the one usually overlooked (1 Thess. 5:18).

7. Then God's peace, which operates beyond the range of human understanding, will protect your feelings and thought-life in Christ Jesus.



PEACE. Worldlings are staggered to see Christians relax behind a tranquil spirit, even when their outward circumstances are harsh and bitter. They don't understand it. Indeed not, it is supernatural. The Spirit witnesses that God's insurance plan covers all of life's cruelties, calms jittery feelings and muffles the nagging thoughts which would otherwise stab the mind. God never asks us to be content with any situation, only to be satisfied with His provision in it.

"What does our thought-life have to do with peace and rejoicing?"

8. Brethren, and this is my final exhortation, occupy your minds with the truth. There is enough that is honorable, just, pure, lovable and merits praise, to fill them. 9 And do it by practicing with the things you have learned from me and beheld in my example. Exercise continually. Work with them daily and not only will the peace of God be with you, but the God of peace Himself.



AWARENESS. A child is fearless with his hand tightly clasped in his father's. Similarly, God's presence arms us against any blow in life, when we're **aware of Him**. The channel of awareness is the mind. Any uncleanness of mind voids the awareness and anxiety sets in. It takes serious discipline to keep the mind clean, total occupation with pure things (2 Cor. 10:5).

10. I am delighted in the Lord that your concern for me has bloomed again. It is a late flowering (just as a flower can't bloom until its season) which shows that you hadn't forgotten me, lacking instead the chance to show it until now. 11. I don't say that as a subtle hint about my personal needs, for experience has taught me how to be self-contained and live independently of my circumstances. 12. The frequent extremes of poverty and plenty have taught me the secret of contentment. It no longer matters whether I am stuffed or starved, have plenty or nothing at all. 13. There is no situation which can overwhelm me now, thanks to Christ who supplies me with His strength.



SECRET. Paul lived in this hostile world much as a deep-sea diver endures on the ocean floor. An air hose makes the diver independent of his surroundings so that environmental shifts have little effect on him. His survival depends entirely on the source from above. The secret of contentment is to be so satisfied with Jesus' supply, that one's tranquility is not regulated by circumstances. Moment by moment occupation with the One, who unlike circumstances never changes, is the Christian's air hose. Contentment is not a Bible promise to be claimed, but an experience which has to be lived.

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"Are you saying you didn't want the Philippians' gift?"

14. Even so, it was an enormous kindness on your part to share in my hardships this way.

15. And you Philippians remember as well as I do that when I left Macedonia in the early days of my Gospel ministry, yours was the only church to invest with me as far as alms given and the Word received. 16. Also when I was in Thessalonica, you contributed to my needs twice. 17. I have no craving for a gift, but I'm happy to see the profits laid up to your account.

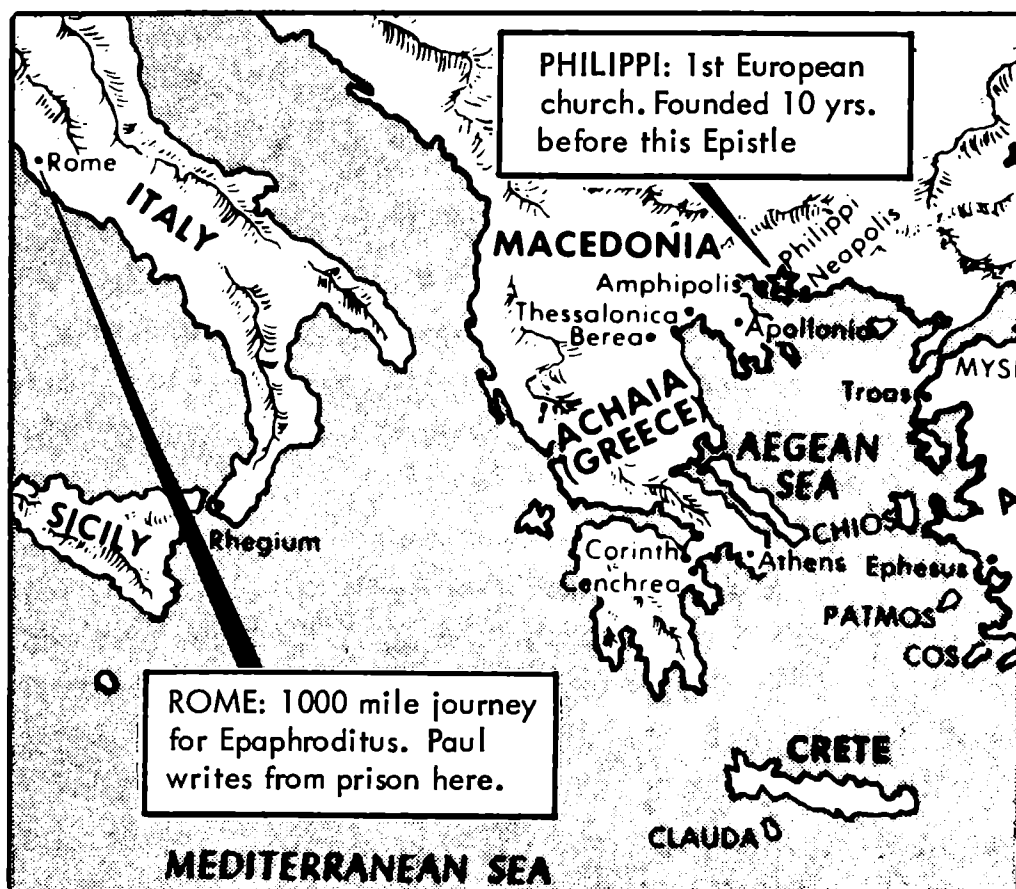
18. Therefore I acknowledge that your gift has well supplied my needs, providing even more than enough. Consequently, I am super-contented, having received all of your gifts from Epaphroditus. Such a sacrifice is like an incense offering which ascends up to God fragrantly and pleases Him. 19. In return for this sacrifice, my God shall supply all of your needs out of the fantastic treasures amassed in Christ Jesus.



WEALTH. Let no stingy soul think to claim this verse or draw upon its treasury through prayer. "Supply all your needs," is no blank check upon the riches of Christ, but God's response to sacrificial giving. This verse has nothing to do with prayer. It speaks of sacrifice. As the Philippians had sacrificed for Paul's needs, so would his God supply theirs in return. It is reciprocal, with action on our part begetting action on the part of God. It may surprise some to find that one cannot outgive God! (Matt. 6:33).

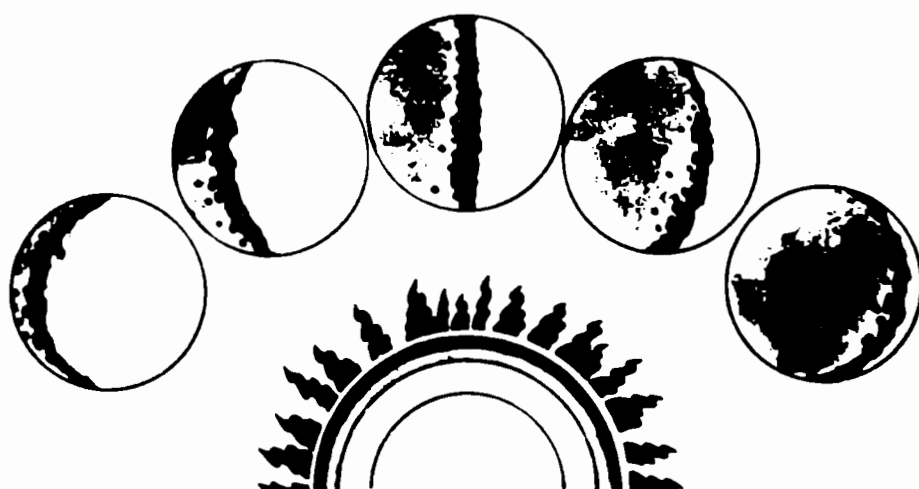
20. To God, who is also our Father, be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21. Remember me to every one truly in Christ. The brethren with me send their greetings too. 22. All of God's people here, particularly the believers in Caesar's household, wish to be remembered to you as well. 23. May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



COL

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COLOSSIANS

COLOSSIANS



CHRIST — "HEAD
OF ALL THINGS"



"FOR BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS
CREATED..." Col. 1:16

CONFUSION AT COLOSSE

COL Intro

Colosse is 90 miles east of Ephesus.

On his third missionary journey, Paul stopped at Ephesus and stayed there for three years. He opened a school. People coming from all over to visit the temple of Diana (a wonder of the world) were contacted and saved. Some went on to become students in Paul's school. Upon graduating they returned to their cities with the Gospel. Epaphras was one of these. He returned to Colosse and founded a local church.

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It was a hard field. The people were superstitious, wierd religions abounded. Angels were worshipped, for it was believed that Michael had once spared the city from a flood. Alexander the Great had earlier transported 2000 Jewish families from Mesopotamia. They brought with them a mixture of corrupted Judaism, full of holy days and traditions. Into this was stirred Theosophy, a strange teaching of reincarnation, which was supposed to provide entrance into the mysteries of the universe.

Secret rites and mystical, yoga-type exercises were alleged to bring a superior knowledge of divine things. Those who had this "advanced knowledge" despised the simplicity of the Gospel and thought to improve upon it by weaving in their own ideas. The result was an attack on the supremacy of Christ. Their high-sounding words and impressive rituals had an effect on the true believers. False teachers arose and the faith of many in the church stood in danger of being diluted or destroyed.

The false teachers, claiming insight through their visions and exercises, taught that Jesus was a created being and not God incarnate. The true God was too holy, they said, to have contact with sinful man. As fore-runners of the gnostics, they taught that a series of beings extended from God in a descending order of rank. Jesus, since He made the actual contact with man, was the lowest of these beings. Thus His Deity was destroyed. His teachings were robbed of authority as the false teachers exalted their own notions over the Word of the Lord.

Epaphras hastened to Rome. He wanted to consult with his old teacher, Paul, then in prison. But he ended up in prison himself. Fortunately he had left a key man in charge back at Ephesus, one Archippus, who was also probably one of Paul's former students.

COL Intro

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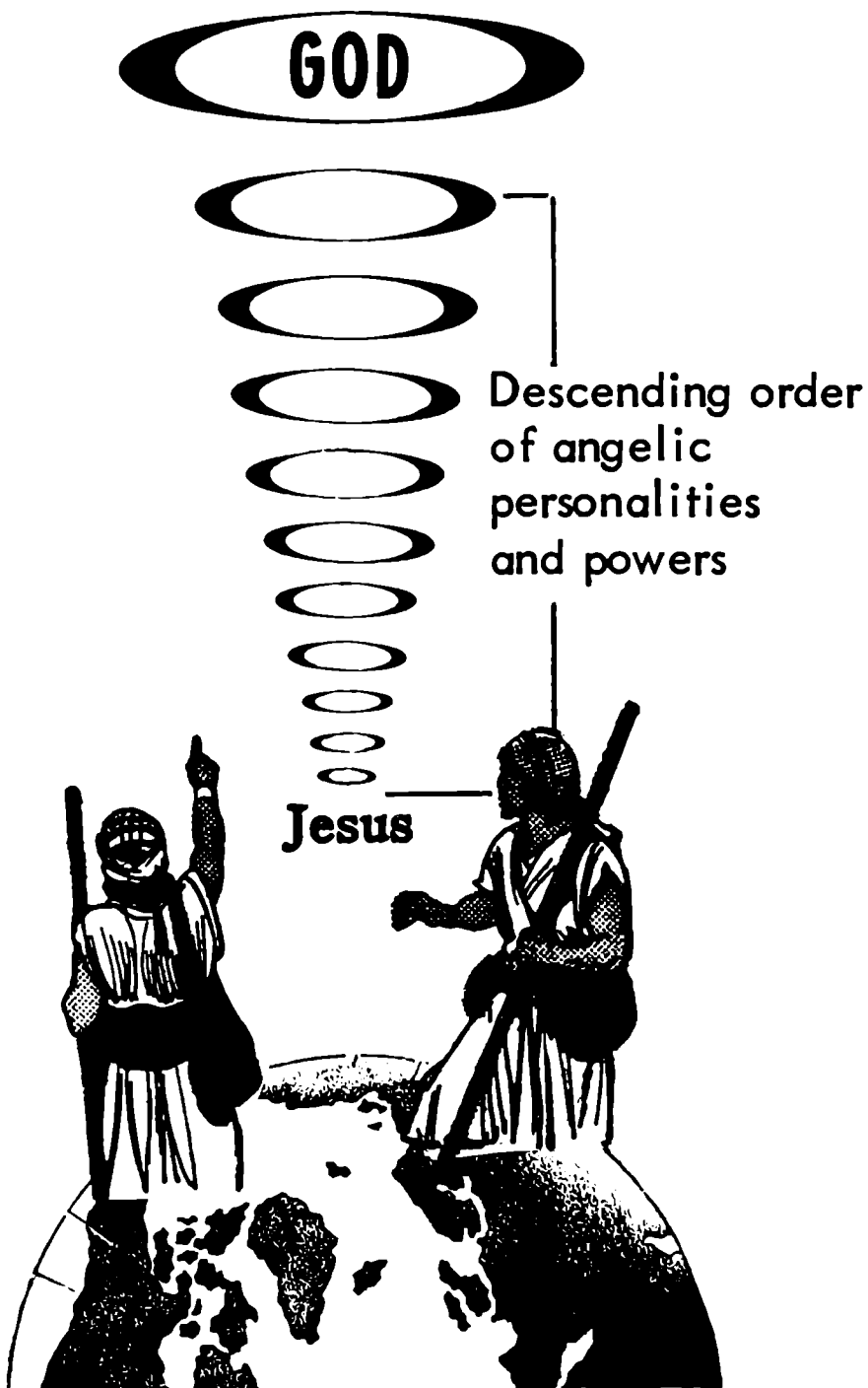
So Paul wrote a letter. Tychicus, who had come to Rome with Epaphras, was free so he was commissioned to return with the letter.

Archippus, armed with this letter, could deliver the faithful at Colosse from the false teachings of the cultists. The letter was written to show the absolute supremacy of Christ over everything and everyone. It argues that while the Gospel comes to people in simplicity, the Christ of the Gospel is, Himself, the Treasury of wisdom and eternal secrets. If men desire the real treasures of knowledge, they should seek them in Christ. Thus the wisdom of Paul is manifest as he meets even the cultists at the center of their own interest. It is possible that some of the false teachers at Colosse abandoned their human notions, seeking deeper and more exciting truth in Christ Himself.

Usually Ephesians is represented as teaching the truth of the church as the "Body of Christ," whereas Colossians presents Him as the "Head of the church." In this rephrased treatment of Colossians, I will ask you to see Him as more than Head of the church. He is the "Head of everything and everyone." This book exalts Him above everything seen and unseen, both now and in the world to come. The rephrasing is done with an eye to the greatness of the One to Whom we are joined. The questions help us focus on Him. The insight paragraphs are designed to help unlock the treasures of wisdom, enabling us to revel in the deeper truths of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—C. S. Lovett

THE ERROR



**JESUS - LOW MAN ON THE
PHILOSOPHERS' TOTEM POLE!**

COLOSSIANS

1 1. From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy the brother, 2. to the saints at Colosse, those true and faithful believers in Christ: grace be to you and peace from God our Father.



SAINTS. This letter is not addressed to the church at Colosse, but those in the church qualifying as "faithful believers." Faithfulness here means faithful to the truths of Christ as taught by Epaphras the founder of the church. The faith of some was being diluted through giving heed to false teachers. Paul begins with reference to his title as an apostle, which he often does when about to deal with error. "By the will of God" is in contrast to the self-appointed teachers of the cults. Timothy no doubt served as a coach in Paul's school at Ephesus, perhaps teaching those who had journeyed the 90 miles westward from Colosse. When Paul says, "THE brother," it indicates Timothy was well known to the readers and his greetings are included.

3. You should know that we pray for you constantly. In every prayer session we are led to thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for you. 4. You see, we hear back a great deal about your Christ-centered faith and the Christian love you show toward all of God's people.

"You seem to thank God a lot for what He does in other Christians."

5. We also thank God for the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, which you learned

about when you first heard the Gospel. Of course that is what sparked your faith in the beginning and now motivates the love you display. 6. The enticing news of this hope came to you just as it has to others throughout the world, and because you understood what it really meant, it is now bearing fruit in your lives. What's more important, there's been continual growth from the first day you heard the truth of God's grace and it made sense to you.



HOPE. Today this word implies uncertainty, as with "I hope so." Used in that sense it refers to feelings **inside a person**. Biblical hope, on the other hand, has nothing to do with feelings, for it is not found **inside a person**. It is "laid up in heaven." A lad expecting an inheritance when he is 21, could call the amount coming to him his "hope." It is his right now, but he won't receive it until a certain day. Biblical hope is like that. And what is it precisely? The privilege of eternal fellowship with God. It is not to be confused with "treasure in heaven," something which Christians must "lay up" for themselves (Mt. 6:20). While every saint has the "hope" which is laid up, very few are busy "laying up" treasure.

"If you didn't bring the news of this hope to the Colossians, who did?"

7. We understand that you learned about this hope from Epaphras who serves the Lord the same as we. He is a wonderful minister, faithful to Christ as well as faithful in representing us to you. 8. He is the one who told us how the Spirit has endowed you with Christian love.



EPAPHRAS. This brother, along with Philemon, Archippus and Aristarchus, was a Colossian. Likely a delegation of them had traveled to Ephesus during Paul's three year stay there and were saved. After being taught in his school, they returned to their own area to establish local churches. This accounts for their warm attachment to Paul and Timothy. The apostle is thus able to speak of their faithfulness and certify the teachings they brought when founding the churches at Colosse, Laodicea and Hieropolis. These cities, all within 12 miles of each other, are familiar to those acquainted with the 1st Chapter of The Revelation. Epaphras is thought to be the founder of all three. Paul never visited any of them personally.

"What is it you expect of people already manifesting Christian love?"

9. Ever since the news of your fine progress in love reached us, we have not failed to serve you in prayer. We are asking God to expose you to the full knowledge of His will, and beyond that, to give you the spiritual insight and wisdom necessary to apply it to your lives.



KNOWLEDGE. Colosse was plagued with false teachers. Members of the church were being victimized by those claiming a super-knowledge of divine things available only through secret rites and practices. It was supposedly beyond the reach of the average believer. Paul uses their special word for this advanced knowledge (epignosis) in asking God to unveil His "full knowledge" to every saint. And further, he asks for the wisdom required to apply it to their lives. Many claiming biblical insight today, fail to see the connection between God's Word and a flat tire on the freeway. They lack the wisdom to see how a delinquent son or an intemperate boss can be a part of God's plan to bring them to maturity. Yes, even an unsaved husband.

10. Why do we ask this? You need it for re-arranging your lives so as to walk worthily of the Lord Jesus, pleasing Him in all you do. Not only will you bear much fruit, but you

will advance toward a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God Himself.

COL

1



RE-ARRANGE. Before coming to Christ one lives for self. After salvation he is to live for the One Who died for him. The degree to which a person shifts from living for self to living for Jesus, is the measure of his spiritual maturity. Since God's ways are opposed to the ways of the world, this shift includes detachment from money, fame, leisure, etc., to a total pre-occupation with the life to come. God is never pleased with the status-quo in any Christian. He wants daily changes into the likeness of Christ. Thus, stresses, suffering, and tribulation become the keys to a godly life. Any man, pleased that a trial is making him more like Jesus, is advancing in maturity. It is a serious re-arrangement of the life that gears one to "suffering first, then the glory which follows!"

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"Pleasing God surely takes more than insight, doesn't it!"

11. So that you might walk worthily of the Lord, we are asking that you would sample the might of His glory and be strengthened to the place where you can pass through any experience and endure it with joy, 12. even to the point of being able to give thanks to God in the midst of the trial. Why not? He has already qualified you to share in the inheritance awaiting all those who belong to the kingdom of light.



TRIALS. The Christian life is one of testing and trial, a program for bringing God's sons to maturity. Christians can happily submit to this program when they see what it is doing for them. Cannot anyone endure almost anything if he knows glorious days are ahead? Therefore, as children of light, we are to understand the purposes behind our trials as well as draw on our supernatural resources for

meeting them. Sadly, many who claim much light, fail to live in the might of the Lord which is needed if trials are to be endured with joy.



MIGHT. God's glory is not His outward majesty (attributes), but His personality, i.e., mercy, generosity, faithfulness, patience, etc. — that is, His nature. This is the very nature we receive at salvation. Paul is asking Christians to live in the power of this new nature, and when we do, we display the same qualities found in God Himself. The strength of this new nature is the Holy Spirit Who lives within us. Thus, to sample the **MIGHT** of God's glory is to experience the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit as He helps us **MATURE** in the stresses of life. In any situation, the Christian can call on God's Spirit and see the miracle of **CHANGE** in himself as he finds, for example, the power to be patient. One beholding these changes in himself can see how God is preparing him for eternity.

"You said God qualified us for the Inheritance of the light kingdom. How!"

13. He rescued us from the domain of darkness, transferring us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.



TRANSFER. The room is dark. You feel for the switch. "Click" . . . there is light. The darkness? It's gone! Light and darkness cannot exist together. In the moment we receive Christ, we put on God's holy nature. "Click" . . . we become "Light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). Our new nature is light. Thus we are instantly transferred [Gk. snatched] from Satan's domain (darkness) to become part of Christ's kingdom (light). You see, little lights and big lights can exist together, but darkness cannot hold even the tiniest light. The Greek says, "Kingdom of the Son of His love," to contrast the essence of Christ's rule (love) to Satan's (hate). A first evidence of our transfer is our new love for others (1st John 3:14).

14. We are redeemed by the Son of God alone. It is because of His shed blood that our sins are forgiven.



REDEEMED. A ransom price is implied in that word. In the ancient past Satan agreed on the death of Christ as the price he'd take for us. God alludes to it in Genesis 3:15. Satan thought that killing Jesus Christ would deprive us of our Saviour and we'd still be his. However, it was concealed from him that Jesus' death was also the very means of our rescue (1 Cor. 2:8). Recall that Satan was not allowed to kill Jesus until the appointed time. Jesus' life of obedience was needed **first** in order to produce our righteous natures, just as His death was needed to satisfy the wages of our sin. Since we receive both the "life" and the "death" of Christ, Paul argues that our salvation is the finished work of Jesus alone. No other agents could be involved as the false teachers were alleging.

**"Just who is Christ exactly that His death
could so liberate us from Satan!"**

15. He is the precise image of the invisible God, existing before anything was created.



IMAGE. Paul would herald Jesus' absolute supremacy with a mighty declaration of His Deity. He chose the Greek word "ikon" for image, which means an exact reproduction. Today's finest camera lenses bear that name. Were photography known then, Paul would have said, Jesus is a clear photograph of the Father, **NOT IN PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**, but in **His personality**. The love, mercy, graciousness of Jesus is precisely that of the Father. "First-born" in the A.V. is a technical reference to His **RANK**. Since He is the only Son of God, so uniquely begotten, He bears the same title as would the first-born of a Jewish family. The term is used to show His relationship to the Father **before** there was any world. The heretical teachers claimed that Jesus was one of a series of **created** agents whom God used to link Himself with the visible world.

16. For it was by Him that everything, whether in heaven or on earth, whether spiritual or material, was created. In fact, it was

through Him and for Him and by Him that all the spiritual powers, including their lords, rulers and agencies were created.



CREATED. Angel worship dominated Colossian religion when Christianity arrived there. The heretics offered doctrinal schemes which saw a string of angelic lords extending between God and man. God was too holy, they said, to have contact with a sinful man. So a descending order of spiritual powers was developed with Jesus at the low end, since He made the actual contact with sinners. Paul declares that not only is Jesus higher than these spiritual lords, but He made them for His own purposes. Therefore observe that the existence of such beings is not denied by Paul. Indeed a well ordered kingdom of powers **DOES EXIST** in the spirit-world, but none is mediator between God and man, for "there is only one Mediator" (1 Tim. 2:5).

17. Thus He existed before anything. In fact, He is not only the Manufacturer of the entire creation, He is its Sustainer as well.



SUSTAINER. See the advance? Not only is Jesus the world's Maker, He is **presently** holding it together. It is one thing to create a sun, quite another to see that it maintains its daily orbit. Were Jesus to withdraw His power from the existing world, it **would disappear**. It is merely a manifestation of His power. This corresponds to Hebrews 1:3 where scientists should look for the real explanation of atomic power. Many have speculated as to the force that holds the atom together, even wondering what it is that makes natural laws hold good from one day to the next. Paul says a Person does this — Jesus! One day He will change the world back into power and when He does—**BANG!** (2 Peter 3:10).

"Wow! No wonder the church is a supernatural organism!"

18. He is also the Head of the church, a body of people once spiritually dead, but given life by Him. Consequently, even the church has

its origin in Him so that He is the beginning of everything. Beyond that He is the first to pass through the death experience and master it, making Himself the supreme Lord of every realm.



SUPREME. Paul continues to list Jesus' credits. Angelic powers are not building the church, as the false teachers claimed. Jesus is, by sharing His life with those who come to Him. Not only is He declared to be the Life Giver, but that same life is immune to death. He demonstrated its immunity to death. What angel ever walked this earth, passed through the death experience and then imparted his life to others? None! Therefore Jesus stands as the Supreme Personage of earth, heaven and even hell! He is the Sovereign of every realm, death included.

19. For it was the Father's intention and good pleasure that the fulness of the divine personality and power should reside in Him.



FULNESS. Here we reach a summit from which to view the glories of Christ. This verse climaxes Paul's statements where Jesus is described as: (1) The exact image of God, (2) totally apart from anything created, (3) Himself the Creator of all things, (4) eternally pre-existing, (5) the Head of His church, (6) The Conqueror of death, (7) The Supreme Personage of all realms. Now His nature is said to be the fulness of Deity, the sum-total of all that is God. The Colossian teachers applied this word "fulness" to the agencies through which God supposedly exerted His power. Paul cleverly takes their word and declares that this "fulness" dwells in Christ alone.

"Is Jesus' work limited to the building of His church?"

20. It was through the finished work of Christ that God purposed to reconcile all things to Himself. By the cross of Jesus, purification was made possible not only for those here on

earth, but in the heavenlies as well. For it is by the blood of Christ that all are reconciled to God.



RECONCILE. Satan's revolt apparently did damage in the spirit-world (heavenlies) as well as on earth. Healing in both realms depends on Christ. So Paul again attacks the error of angelic superiority, by stating that even heavenly dignitaries need Christ's cleansing. We don't fully understand this now, but we can recall that the blood of the O.T. sacrifice was applied to objects in the tabernacle which represented the heavenlies (Heb. 10:21-23). It appears that both those on earth and in heaven need Jesus' purifying work. Paul argues that if angelic personalities must also look to Jesus, it is obvious Who is supreme and alone worthy of worship! Those participating in Satan's revolt will never be reconciled (2 Peter 2:4; Matt. 25:41).

21. At one time you (Colossians) were enemies of God. You were hostile toward Him as you determined to live and delight in evil. It was your preference for evil that separated you from Him. 22. Even so, He has completely restored you to fellowship with Himself through the physical obedience of Christ unto death. The cross, you see, not only provides a holiness which allows you to live in God's presence; it even removes the very stain of sin so that you are beyond the reproach of anyone. There is no evidence which could be used to charge you.



RESTORED. Christ's death in His physical body, the realm of our fall, was due to obedience. His life of obedience produced the righteous nature we received at salvation. God brings us to holiness in two ways: (1) by giving us a new nature which we wear as a "robe of righteousness," causing us to appear spotless in His sight; (2) by the gradual development of our persons **inside that robe** (nature) as we learn to outlive this new nature. Therefore Paul speaks

of two kinds of holiness: **Instantaneous holiness** (being found in the new nature) and **progressive holiness** (the maturing of the person inside the robe, i.e., the one wearing the new nature). There is no conflict between these truths, even though denominations sometimes emphasize one more than the other.

"Then does faith alone make us perfect in God's sight?"

23. It is assumed, of course, that you are maintaining yourselves in that faith for which Christ alone is the foundation. And that you are so firmly established in Him, that you will persist in this faith and never once allow yourselves to be shifted from the hope which became yours when you heard the Gospel—the same joyous news that is now spreading throughout the world and of which, I Paul, have the privilege of being a minister.



PERSIST. Verse 22 speaks of Christ's part in bringing the Colossians to holiness. But verse 23 indicates that it is not without some maintenance on their part. Man's job is to respond to Christ's work with faith. Thus Paul has shifted to human responsibility. Since faith is a human quality (with none in heaven), people are free to place their faith where they will. The Greek article ("that faith") marks this as precise faith in the Person of Jesus **alone**. Humanly speaking, a man must not only make sure that his faith is deposited in the right place, but also that it **stays there**. "If you shift," says Paul, "you'll be abandoning me, to follow false teachers."

"Say, you feel your own commission is absolutely vital, don't you?"

24. You know that my sufferings are for your sake. But I don't say that to sadden you. Actually I am glad about them. For it is by means of my suffering that I contribute my share of what remains of Christ's suffering in His body, the church.



REMAINS. Step on a man's toe. Watch his face! The pain is expressed there. The connection of Christ the Head, and His body, the church, is so close that any suffering in the body registers in the Head. The agony of the Gospel didn't stop with Jesus' death, for the world continues to hate His body as it hated Him. His suffering is extended in the lives of those who minister. Even as the apostle writes, iron bites into his wrist. His life is in danger, yet he rejoices. He is following in the steps of His Master—a glory in itself!

25. God, Who commissioned me to serve His church, also made me your minister in particular. It is my task to open to you the fulness of His Word, 26. revealing a secret which has been hidden from all ages and generations of the past. Now, of course it is being unveiled before all of His people. 27. God would have you Gentiles enter into the truth of this secret and experience the wonder of it. And what is the secret? Christ's indwelling presence inside you, your established hope of glory!



SECRET. The shekinah glory, appearing in the O.T. tabernacle, was God's presence in Israel. Only the priests drew near with Gentiles barred from intimate access. When Jesus appeared, God's glory took on a body and was found walking among men. But now this! God's presence **INSIDE PEOPLE!** And Gentiles yet! Whoever dreamed of such a thing! It was a deep secret, not once hinted in the O.T. Imagine—God's glory found in those who once hated Him! If the false teachers were hungry for insight to mystery, here is a whopper! This is a truth to stagger the imagination of any teacher! But would Paul's Gentile readers grasp its significance? Could even the Jews with 1500 years of exposure to revelation understand it? Or, for that matter can we with all of our enlightenment appropriate the full wonder of this truth!

28. Now you can understand why we preach Christ wherever we go. As prudently as we

know how, we warn and teach everyone we can. It is not only our ambition to bring souls to Christ, but to bring them to maturity in Him as well. 29. This is how I have purposed to invest my life. And while it is not an easy job, my success is guaranteed. I don't mind the labor, really, for the work is not done in my own strength, but in the energy of Christ Who works through me in power.



WARN & TEACH. See the two elements of Paul's work? **Warning** is emotional, addressed to the heart. By this he stirs men to repent and receive Christ. **Teaching** on the other hand is intellectual, addressed to the mind.

Paul wanted disciples, not babes, so he challenged believers to grow up in Christ. Why? Maturity is needed if one is to enjoy God fully in the fellowship to come. There is a genuine gap between children and adults. Soul-growth does not occur in heaven. The conditions which produce it are found on earth alone. For example, to forgive, one must first be hurt. And long-suffering is a grace which comes after suffering a long time. Will suffering be found in heaven? Obviously, soul-growth occurs only on earth for the stresses which produce it are not a part of the life to come (Rev. 21:4).

2 1. I wish I could tell you how great is my concern for you and those at Laodicea. Yes, and for all the others whom I have never met personally.



CONCERN. Not only schooled for years in the Jew's religion, Paul was also caught up to the "third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2), where he was exposed to truths of eternity. He knows what it means to receive Christ and enter into the Godhead. He has seen it—from the other side. Yet he ministers to Gentiles, a people ignorant of God, who serve superstitions and embrace man-made religions. Suddenly they receive Christ! In a flash they inherit glory! Could

a beggar, suddenly made king, begin to comprehend what had happened to him? No. Paul yearns to open to the Gentile Christians what they have in Christ.

"Don't you wish you were with them this minute!"

2. If I were there with you right now, I'd first of all encourage your hearts, making sure they were welded together in Christian love. Then I would see to it that your spiritual understanding was so complete you could revel in the wealth of insight, having an unquestioned hold on God Himself! I want your experience in Christ to be so full that you can see how ALL the mysteries of God are explained and fulfilled in Him alone.



WEALTH. Worldlings think money brings security, satisfaction and peace. But of course it doesn't. The wealthiest man is one who is fully insured in Christ. His future is settled, his deepest longings satisfied. Yet that is but the beginning. A wealth of wisdom is open to him also, an inexhaustible mine of insight. He is invited to dig its treasures without limit. Since God is pleased to make us His full partners in glory, He is delighted to have us uncover nuggets of wisdom even now. Ah, but the mine in which all this wealth is stored is a Person—Jesus. He is the treasury of heaven's knowledge.

3. Apart from Him, no one can even approach the divine secrets, let alone understand them.



SECRETS. The false teachers insisted that blind faith was all right for the masses, but that the higher knowledge of God was reserved for the philosophic mind. They taught that one had to be initiated into their secret societies before the mysteries would open to them. Paul agrees that there are mysteries. But he denies that they are limited to the few. He says they are accessible to all in Christ who will take the trouble to search them out.

"Why do you speak such profound things to these Colossian Christians!"

4. I say these things to forearm you against those who would try to deceive you and lead you astray with logic and convincing arguments. 5. Physically speaking I am a long way from you. But in spirit, I couldn't be any closer to you. In that sense I am with you now beholding the orderly discipline of your lives and seeing the way your faith has become firmly settled in Christ.

COL 2

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SETTLED. The most wonderful secret any Christian can learn is contentment with Christ Himself—as a **Person!** The Colossian deceivers offered deeper experiences by way of their rituals and exercises. Some believers were led into strange experiences purported to be more spiritual than simple faith in Jesus. Even the term "deeper life" implies simple faith is shallow. Depth in Christ is not found in mysteries or more knowledge. It is a matter of intimacy with Jesus, letting Him satisfy the soul's longings with His presence. Those seeking **DEEPER** experiences become vulnerable to **STRANGE** experiences authored by Satan even though they appear inspired and are sought in the Name of the Lord (Mt. 7:22). Obedience to the light **one already has** will carry him deeper into the Christ-life than soaking up more knowledge.

6. Since you have already received Christ Jesus the Lord, let that unshakeable fact regulate and guide your lives. See that your behaviour reflects the truth that you are actually joined to Him. 7. Inasmuch as your roots are now in Him, consider that He alone is your source of life. If you follow the instructions I gave your leaders, your faith will grow. More and more you will be depending on Him for everything. And as you advance in maturity,

you will be thanking Him again and again for the joy that fills you.



RECEIVED. "Since you have received, don't be deceived!" That's the essence of Paul's counsel here. The experience of receiving Christ gives them more than all the world's philosophers rolled into one. Three solid possessions emerge: (1) They have had the **experience** of receiving Jesus. The Spirit testifies to that. (2) **Changes** have occurred in their lives as a result. (3) Inward **joy** fills them as they relax in the sure knowledge of sins forgiven. Philosophy cannot produce this in anyone. Christianity is unique, separated from religions inasmuch as Christ is **literally** received. Whereas religions, offering creeds, codes and doctrinal schemes are but **OPINIONS**, receiving Christ is an **EXPERIENCE**.

"What if the philosophers are very intelligent, educated and make sense. What's more, they are talking about God, not idols. There could be some truth in what they say, couldn't there?"

8. Watch out lest some clever word-handler captures you. Beware of those with highly spiritual fantasies and intellectual schemes based on human invention; their only authority is tradition. They are trying to trap you. Their ideas are sheer nonsense, lofty theories about the nature of the universe, perhaps, but certainly not the teachings of Christ. Most of them, you'll find, degrade Him.



BEWARE. These enemies attack the mind, the very place where Satan does his dirty work. More than one saint has given his **heart** to Jesus, yet Satan has managed to keep his **mind**. Satan is pleased to devastate a life even when he can't have the soul. And he has plenty of clever people serving him who know how to use religious bait. In this case, the teachings involved traditions such as specific foods — washings — self-punishing disciplines — initiatory rites — metaphysical and Jewish theologies. The

teachers were pious and their ideas sounded very reasonable, yet they were satanic traps laid by false teachers. We have these cultists today.

COL

2

9. The plain truth is, the fulness of the Godhead is embodied in the Person of Christ!



EMBODIED. What a powerful declaration of Deity! It means that the total personality of God belongs to Jesus. When we reach heaven, we will not meet a Personality different from the one manifested by our Lord Jesus. Two observations rise from the Greek: (1) When Jesus is in a body, the fulness of the Godhead indwells that body. (2) When Jesus leaves the body, the fulness of the Godhead departs also. Consequently the fulness of God is found in the PERSON of Jesus, whether He occupies a body or not. This statement refutes the false teachers who fragmented the fulness of God over a descending order of angelic powers. Paul avows that the entire Godhead is wrapped up in the Person of Jesus! This is his strongest statement yet.

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"What happens to us then, seeing we are joined to this same Person?"

10. When you received the Person of Christ you were joined to that same fulness! Therefore your own spiritual makeup is now full. You are complete in Christ, the Fountain from which all authority and power proceeds.



COMPLETE. Slice a baby orange. See — everything is there — the skin, sections, core and seeds. Just a wee thing, yet complete, needing only to mature. So with us. When we receive Christ, we instantly possess everything needed to participate in the Godhead. All we lack is growth. Shocked? With the "fulness of God" residing in Jesus, we are joined to that Fulness as we become one with Christ! Staggering, isn't it! Yet this agrees with God's plan to raise us to FULL ADULTHOOD in Christ (Eph. 4:13). Eternity will not find Jesus unequally yoked to inferiors. We are to share

His glory as equals — "joint heirs" — full partners! (Rom. 8:17). Do not confuse adulthood with maturity. Christ raises us to adulthood, but we mature as we grow in this life. See again Jesus' absolute supremacy — angels do not lift us to our position in the heavenlies — only our Lord has the power to do this. In Christ we have all there is. What we do with it, is up to us!

"If we are really joined to the Godhead, then more takes place than mere union, doesn't it? What about our sinful natures?"

11. The instant you were saved a spiritual surgery occurred. In Christ, your soul was disconnected from the enslaving power of your body. That is, your old nature which resides in your flesh, was circumcised off your soul along with its lusts and passions. It is no longer an integral part of your person, even though it still is a part of your body. This is what releases you from its dominion.



SURGERY. The ancient Jewish leaders stressed **outward** circumcision which only **represented** moral purity. But Jesus actually performs an **inward** surgery (heart circumcision) which makes moral purity truly possible. Disconnected from the exclusive hold of the old nature, we are free to serve the new nature. The old nature, detached from the soul, continues to reside in the flesh, finally dropping off at death. The unsaved, who do not have this spiritual surgery, remain forever joined to their old nature and it accompanies them into hell. This is what Jesus meant by, "die in your sins" (John 8:24). Please note, however, that release from the old nature does not mean that we will never again serve it any more than release from prison guarantees a man will not again break the law. On the other hand, as a new car would be useless to a man in prison, so is a new nature useless to one still bound within the old.

12. Simultaneously you received the death of Christ. That is, once you were baptized into

Him, His death became yours as surely as though you had shared His tomb. In like manner, through your faith in God's working, you also have His resurrection life as surely as if you had risen from the grave with Him. Thus His death and His life are both yours as the result of your being IN HIM!



BAPTIZED. This is a transliterated (untranslated) Greek word which means "placed into." No man puts himself in Christ, but is placed there by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). Water baptism is not taught by this passage, but water baptism wonderfully teaches this truth. Paul is contrasting the SPIRITUAL work performed IN US by Christ, with the OUTWARD works required by the false teachers at Colosse. He insists that the ENTIRE finished work of Christ is executed within us since we are "in Him!" Does the old man still sin? Yes. Does the old man deserve death? Yes. Does he die. Yes. That's why it is important for us to receive the death of Christ (Rom. 6:6). The justice of God requires death for our sins, but we have a death . . . "in Christ!" In fact, the new life in Christ assumes the grave is already behind us (Rom. 6:4).

13. You see you were trapped in your old nature which caused you to sin. And your sins separated you from God. As far as He was concerned you were dead, spiritually dead. You couldn't help yourself, that old nature was not yet cut off from your soul. You had no way to make yourself holy. Your only prospect was eternal separation from God — hell. But in spite of that, God has completely forgiven your sins and made you alive in Christ.



TRAPPED. Before salvation man has the one, carnal nature. He inherits from Adam that which Paul calls the "old man." Everyone arrives in this world with that nature attached to his soul. This is why, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Therefore Jesus' first work IN US is to disconnect our souls

from the old nature and provide us with a new one. The new one is Christ's own. That, of course is what makes it holy. Also this is what makes it possible for us to live in God's presence. Being able to live in the presence of God is called "eternal life." Without the new nature a man must spend eternity separated from God, for no man has the means of making himself righteous. As a brain surgeon cannot operate on his own brain, neither can a sinner operate on his own soul. Even if he could, where would he get a new, righteous nature? To live cut off from God forever is "eternal death" — forever trapped in the old nature, is hell!

**"Isn't it enough just having Christ's life?
Why is having His death so necessary?"**

14. As sinners we broke God's Law. A death warrant was issued listing the charges proved against us, charges of which we were guilty. But God took that warrant and nailing it to the cross, legally cancelled it.



CANCELLED. Since we had sinned we were guilty before the Law. And God's Law is eternal. It cannot be set aside, neither will it pass away (Mt. 5:18). And it is this Law which sends men to hell — forever! If its demands are not met God's justice is violated. The Law specifically says we must die for our sins — and we do — **IN CHRIST!** That's why it is important that His death becomes ours. Redemption, you see, is not merely a matter of mercy only, it is also one of justice. When we **DIE IN CHRIST**, the Law is satisfied (Rom. 10:4). When someone dies **outside of Christ**, that same Law sends him to hell forever. That's why it has to remain in effect forever. Were it ever relaxed, men could leave hell. A Law that has the power to condemn to an eternal hell must remain spotless and be perfectly executed. That is why God's mercy must not compromise His justice.

15. God did something else in the cross. He openly displayed Jesus' triumph over Satan, disarming him and his entire band of spirits down to the last demon.



SATAN. The Greek is capable of double meaning here, allowing that Jesus shook Himself loose from these powers or that He disarmed them. Both ideas are true. When He cried, "It is finished!" and departed from His body, Satan's access to Him ended. At the same time, His death was the final victory over the devil. He had sampled the worst Satan could deliver and was triumphant. This victorious life is what produced the righteous nature we receive at Salvation. This nature is our source of victory over the devil. But we also have the old nature which is his stamping grounds. The cross was Jesus' "ticker tape" parade acknowledging before the hosts His great victory over the devil. At the same time it sealed Satan's doom forever.

"But what has that got to do with the false teachers at Colosse?"

16. Since Christ has made you so complete, don't let anyone sell you on the idea that your faith is to be measured by sets of rules relating to diet and drink. Ignore those people who would bind you to the old Jewish festivals, new moons and sabbaths. They are trying to regulate your faith with ceremonies. 17. At best such things are merely symbols of unseen truths. At one time they had prophetic value, but that ended when Christ arrived on the scene in Person. Why should you involve yourselves with symbolical ordinances when you already have the real thing—Christ Himself!



MEASURED. Paul is not so much attacking the externals of worship as he is deploring the use of them as a measurement of faith. Some today interpret spirituality as church-going and confuse the deeper life with intense religious activity. Others measure success in Christ by the size of budgets and buildings. Still more feel settled in the faith because they have been baptized. Some even look on what they **Don't do** as a yardstick of holiness. But faith can only be measured by one's hunger for Jesus and the desire to exalt Him daily. Obedience to His command and daily changes into

His likeness are the measurements HE would take of us. What we are and do externally might appear spiritual in the sight of others, but each of us knows secretly within ourselves what is our real commitment to Christ. That's what counts.

18. Also, watch out for those insisting on false worship addressed to angels. They can rob you of your fellowship with Christ. Indeed these people claim a superior wisdom through visions, but their confidence is ridiculous. They are simply using their own imaginations, speculating about things they can't see. Don't be impressed with their self-styled authority. Actually they haven't any, for their so called higher wisdom is as carnal as it can be.



ANGELS. In O.T. times, angels did serve as mediators between God and man. Later Jews presumed to worship them as an approach to God. After the nation had drifted from Him, the leaders began to reason that God's majesty was so great He had to be approached through lesser dignitaries. We see this today in one large religious group. At Colosse special worship was given to the Archangel Michael, for it was thought he once diverted the Lycus river thereby sparing the city from a flood. Obviously, any angel or "saint" interposed between us and Jesus destroys the intimate "Head and body" relationship God seeks.

**"Where do people get such notions?
Why do they come up with these ideas?"**

19. Such people are not really joined to Christ themselves. If they were really in the body, they would know that He is their Head and that all they are and have is directly from Him alone. Is not any body administered by its head? Even to the point of receiving nourish-

ment and instructions? It is our direct and vital connection with Christ that makes us alive and welds us to one another into the one body. Why, even growth is impossible unless we are literally joined to God.



HEAD. Paul knew about joints and ligaments, he'd seen dismembered bodies. But we know about the nervous system and its instantaneous contact with the brain. We are as close to Jesus as a touch is telegraphed to the mind, linked by a SPIRITUAL nervous system. Let anything sever this communication and paralysis sets in. Those who would place intermediaries between us and Christ would SEVER our spiritual communication system. Anything which moves our focus from Jesus, such as worshipping saints, destroys our heart communication with the Lord. Think what would happen if you inserted anything between your own body and head?

20. So, if by your death in Christ you severed all of your connections with this world's way of looking at things, and its formulas for being saved, why would you now act as though you were still subject to its rules? Since the way of the world is no longer your sphere of life, why bind yourself to such prescriptions as, 21. "Don't eat this," or, "Don't taste that," or, "Don't even touch the other?" 22. Obeying these man-made regulations might make people appear pious, but they have no spiritual value at all. How can they? All such things were designed to be consumed and it is intended that they pass away.



SEVERED. The world has its own ideas about righteousness. Man says "I want to do it my way," so he invents schemes for religious perfection. We once participated in that kind of thinking until the **experience in Christ** severed us from all of man's formulas for holiness. Joined to Jesus we already have God's own Righteousness.

Worldly recipes should appear stupid to us. At best, any physical act can only symbolize spiritual truth. Certainly outward prohibitions cannot produce inward holiness. We have been removed from the world of rites. Paul is saying, "Be severed from the world and don't become involved in its ways, for they can sever your fellowship with Christ."

23. Such practices might make one appear pious. He could even win honors for wisdom if he purports unusual insight by means of them. Unfortunately no amount of body punishment or worship of angels can humble the will of a man. As severe as the body treatment might be, it is of no help in silencing the demands of the flesh. Far from eliminating unclean thoughts and desires, they end up making a man proud.



PROUD. See Paul's two warnings here? One against man-made rules (Legalism and flesh-exalting ceremonies), the other against angel worship (or interposing mediaries between God and man). Both are condemned as a "show of wisdom." The King James says, "will worship," because man's will is exalted above God's, with human notions installed over His clear revelation. These Colossians' errors have bloomed in our day. On the one hand we see over-strict consciences with respect to diet and drink. On the other a craving for spiritual manifestations, "intruding into things not seen." Such "worship" refuses the simple dignity of heart communication with Jesus, preferring rituals which make people appear pious and important. Man has ever wanted to "get into the act," when it comes to his salvation.

3 1. Since you have risen with Christ, shift your ambitions to heaven. Inasmuch as your Master reigns there, that's the place to invest. 2. Purpose to

be rich in the next life and discount, yea even ignore, the attractions of this one. 3. As far as this world is concerned, you are already "dead and gone," with your new life temporarily hidden in God. 4. But in that day when the Christ of our lives is revealed, you will appear with Him — sharing in His glory!



SHIFT. A man facing a wall protested it was too high to climb. His friend seized his wallet and tossed it over the fence. Whereupon the man scrambled over to retrieve his money. Treasure made the difference. Jesus told us to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, noting that "where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also" (Mt. 6:21). If we shift our investments to heaven we soon have too much laid up for our hearts to be any other place. We couldn't afford to have them any place else if all of our ambitions are centered there. Paul would have us get greedy in Christ, forgetting all about worldly treasure. "Since Jesus is directing the affairs of heaven," he says, "That's the only safe place for your wealth!" Besides, in the day of His return we'll be very much ashamed if we haven't invested all in Him! (1st John 2:28).

"But you're talking about more than the shift of our investments, aren't you!"

5. As long as you are on this earth, consider as dead the carnal desires raging within your old nature such as: sexual immorality, filthy-mindedness, uncontrolled passion, evil ambition and greed. If you prefer these to the things of heaven, you are guilty of idolatry, 6. which always provokes the holy anger of God. 7. Your old life, it is true, consisted of nothing but such things, for you lived only to do them. But now all that is behind you.



CONSIDER. Paul now sets forth a daring new way of thinking for his Colossians. "Consider as dead," he says, "your old nature." Or putting it another way, say to yourself . . . "When Jesus died, I died." The significance? If one has died, then he is **ALREADY** living on the other side of death. If that were so, the body containing the old nature would have dropped off leaving the Christian clothed in his new nature only. A spotless, holy life is all that could result. This is the goal Paul now puts before them. His words here carry the force of his words to the Romans, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God" (6:11). Such reckoning or thinking puts before the Christian God's own holiness as a challenge of this present life. Paul is therefore saying, "Since you have received the new nature, live as though you no longer had the old one!" Such thinking is the renewed mind of Ephesians 4:23.

"Are we expected to become spotless Christians!"

8. Not only are those things to go, but in addition you must put off anger, furious rages, slanderous and abusive words, 9. as well as all lies to each other. You are to be absolutely through with that old nature and its evil products, 10. seeing you have chosen to put on the new nature. You have embarked on an entirely new kind of life, fitted for holiness. Each day should find you closer to Jesus likeness, enjoying deeper intimacy with your Creator.



INTIMACY. The Greek reads: "Being renewed unto knowledge," with the present tense indicating daily advances in Christ-likeness and deeper intimacy with God. The divine intention is to bring us to a maturity which allows us to participate in the Godhead. We must be more like Jesus today than we were yesterday, or a day is wasted. Though all of us begin as babes in the Spirit, we are to grow in knowledge (The Word) and by experiences (daily events). Each day is filled with opportunities to mature and love Jesus more.

Even the marriage program is designed to teach us about intimacy and the tenderness of being loved.

11. You can see how a man's nationality, social status, culture or religious rank could have no bearing on this new life. All that counts is being in Christ.



THAT COUNTS. The basis for unity within the church is the fact that our lives are **IN CHRIST** — a completely new realm of existence. What a man might have been formerly makes no difference and Paul has scanned in four directions: Nationality (Greek and Jew), religion (circumcision and uncircumcision), culture (barbarian, scythian), social status (bond, free). In the old life there was division and discord. In the new, "we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25). Since the old life has been cut off from us by our spiritual circumcision in Christ, it follows that we now share a common life in the one body, the church. This calls for a completely new mode of behaviour.

"You mean this new life has its own behaviour pattern?"

12. Since you are dearly loved of God and chosen to be His holy ones, it is urgent that you re-arrange your lives accordingly. There is clothing which goes with this new life and you must wear it. See then that you outfit yourselves with a heart of compassion and be as kind to each other as you can. Keep your self-estimates low so as to deal gently with one another. Pride makes a man impatient with his brother. 13. Even though you might have a perfect right to complain, bear with that brother. Yes, go further and forgive him in the same manner and degree in which the Lord has forgiven you. 14. The most outstanding feature of the new life is love.

Love is the thread from which all our new garments are made. It is the one grace which welds the entire church together in perfect unity.



CLOTHING. What Paul refers to as the "fruit of the Spirit" in other places, here becomes the "clothing of the Spirit." This is city talk rather than farmer talk. The new life is now pictured as requiring a new set of clothes. Paul asks us to discard the filthy rags of the old nature and put on new garments worthy of the new life. The material from which they are made is love, from whence spring compassion, patience and tolerance. Inasmuch as we are totally forgiven, we are obliged to **forgive totally**. Able to forgive anyone anything, we are no longer wolves, but God's lambs — harmless and gentle. A wolf may devour a lamb, but it is unthinkable that lambs would attack each other.

15. Since you have been called to enjoy the peace of Christ within the one body, let peace do its sentry duty and become the judge of your hearts. You can be thankful it is there.



SENTRY. The peace of God is a signal system which warns of anything displeasing to God. If you feel restless about a matter the warning buzzer is sounding in your heart. In any decision, first present it to God and then check your heart to see if His peace is there. This is an extremely useful device for determining His will in any given matter. Further, be assured that nothing helps Satan more than upset and aroused feelings. Whenever you are perturbed, guard every word spoken to a Christian brother. Say absolutely nothing when you are angry. With practice, the peaceful heart can become God's primary means for guiding your hands, feet and mouth. The bond of peace has the highest priority in the church, ascending above matters of doctrine and practice (Eph. 4:3).

"Does this new behaviour pattern affect our church program any?"

16. Provide a large, permanent place in your fellowship for the teachings of Christ, so that

all may draw from them richly and in abundance. And from the Word of God, as wisely as you know how, teach and counsel one another by means of your psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Let joyous and heart-felt thanks to God be found in all your singing.



SINGING. At love-feasts or family gatherings of the saints, their hearts were to be so full of the Word of Christ, their mouths flowed with songs and teachings and praise. Thus all were edified. Paul pictures the sharp contrast with the heathen feasts where licentious and filthy singing was part of the entertainment at Greek banquets. "Pagan parties" today employ wild, stimulating music calculated to arouse the flesh. Christian music should stir the spirit — even to the point of ecstatic worship of the Lord! Observe that this was not to be the privilege of a very few, but all Christians as a body. In the early church, when few could read, many of the teachings and doctrines were put to song. In that way they became a happy part of the Christian's life.

17. In everything you do or say, consider that you represent the Lord Jesus and perform your acts as unto Him. As you do so, be thankful to the Father for the privilege that is yours in Christ.

"What effect does this new behaviour pattern have on our jobs and homes!"

18. Wives be subject to your husbands as befits this new life in the Lord. 19. Husbands love your wives and do not let yourselves accumulate bitterness against them.



WIVES-HUSBANDS. Paul treats marriage differently here than he did in Ephesians, where the husband's dignity is noted by comparing him with Christ and the wife to the church. Here he is dealing with problems. The Greek indicates the wives may have been lax in their marital

duties (asserting their new freedom in Christ, perhaps) and the husbands impatient with their weaknesses. Bitterness steals upon a man fast. And since the male is stronger and has more fire, he is often tempted to abandon his humility as "head of the wife," (not head of the house), and deal too harshly, particularly should she fail to gratify his wishes. Paul insists that not only must the wife submit, but the husband must reign in love. Otherwise bitterness will result, damaging the marriage.

20. Children obey your parents to the letter, for nothing less is pleasing to the Lord.
21. Fathers, do not irritate your children with unjust and capricious treatment, lest you damage their spirits and they lose heart completely.



CHILDREN-FATHERS. The wife's submission to the husband removes from her hands the responsibility for the children. God holds fathers responsible for their maturity. Disobedient children displease the Lord even as do the parents who tolerate them. Yet they are not given as slaves. Parents were ordained for the benefit of children. Chastisement is to be inflicted only "as unto the Lord." An exasperated or over-teased child soon loses heart and gives up all efforts to please his parents. Therefore God forbids the dispiriting of children, for a broken spirit is fatal to youngsters.

22. You who are slaves, give your human masters full obedience in everything. But not with the carnal notion of currying their favor. That's what the man-pleasers do. Look on your servitude as a spiritual matter and consider that you are really serving the Lord.
23. Then, regardless of the task assigned you, you can put your whole heart into it and do it as unto the Lord and not some man.
24. Beyond that, your spirit will be more willing if you keep reminding yourself that the Lord is your real Paymaster. He will see that you collect what is due you out of the great inheritance in heaven. That way you

can serve your human master, but doing it as the slave of Christ. 25. Now should you do wrongly toward your master, the Lord is still your heavenly Paymaster and He has no favorites. In either case, you'll get what you deserve.



SLAVES. In Paul's day slaves were cruelly exploited. Still, who cannot take anything if he knows better days are ahead, that justice will finally be his? These verses apply to modern employees. Christians can endure low wages and hard conditions and still give sincere service with a smile. The Christian considers his real Boss is Jesus. What he is deprived of for a time, will be more than compensated in the big "Payday!" The noblest title we can bear is "Slave of Christ!" It should be no surprise when earthly conditions make us live up to that title. Only a Christian can suffer degradation and exploitation with a smile and joy! He can turn any situation into profit for Christ. It's not hard to see how strikes and marches do not fit God's plan for the Christian, who is instructed to be content with his lot in life.

4 1. You who are masters, give your slaves fair and just treatment, bearing in mind that your Master in heaven is carefully watching you and you will have to account to Him.



MASTERS. Paul's words are as needed today in our employee-employer relationships as in the days of Colosse. A Christian could well look upon his employee and wonder, "Why am I his employer? Why is he my employee?" The answer: "That I may take him and so forbear with him as to sweeten his role in life and help him be what he ought in Christ." God has obviously purposed that some should serve while others rule. Yet, this does not violate Christian brotherhood, for both have the same Christ as Lord. Christianity is not concerned with the ranks of men, for the Lord can be served in any situation — even behind an Iron Curtain.

"This has sure been wonderful, Brother Paul. Any final exhortations!"

2. See that you become relentless in prayer. But make sure that it is a time of watchfulness and thanksgiving as well. 3. Please mention us in your prayers, asking God to open doors so that we might enter into many places with the Gospel and share the mystery of Christ. Right now, of course, I am limited to these prison walls. 4. Even so, will you pray particularly for me that I might be able to open up the mystery of Christ in such a way that it is crystal clear to men everywhere? This is my duty, I must not do less.



PRAYER. See the three qualities enjoined by Paul: (1) Perseverance: as steadfast and natural as breathing. (2) Watchfulness: drowsiness at prayer time is Satan's doing. A lot can happen in the spirit-world when God's people go to prayer and Satan is desperate to block it. So beware of sleepiness when you kneel to pray. (3) Gratitude: concentration on our needs makes us beggars, but remembering His kindnesses makes us thanksgivers. Steadfast prayer is a wonderful ministry which can be developed to a high degree as one turns his imagination into a sanctuary. Here he beholds God as a Person, thereby bridging the gap between the flesh and the spirit.

5. If you're wise, you'll take advantage of every opportunity to present the Gospel to those outside of Christ. Of course you must be subtle and careful as you do this. 6. Your speech should be pleasant and provocative, skilled in fact, giving just the right words to each person you meet.



PROVOCATIVE. Paul is speaking of the skilled witness. The Greek says, "seasoned with salt," a metaphor which indicates that the witness' words should be palatable to the unsaved listener. As salt flavors food, so does effective technique make the Gospel arresting and fascinating to lost souls. In our day of "hit and run" living, we must learn the science of witnessing "with salt" when so many are Gospel-hardened. That Christian who makes witnessing his business, is wise indeed. Why? Because the only treasure awaiting any of us in heaven is that which we "lay up" for ourselves. Witnessing is the way we accumulate our wealth. Does any Christian honestly intend to arrive in heaven — flat broke?

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"Say, that's pretty strong teaching for someone who's in jail. How do you witness in your situation!"

7. Our dear brother Tychicus will give you the details as to my present circumstances. He is a great worker, truly faithful in serving the Lord here with me. 8. I am sending him to you so that you may know how things are with us and to bring his encouragement to your hearts. 9. With him will be Onesimus, one of your group. He too is faithful and beloved. Together they will bring you up to date on things at this end.

"Any word from the others there with you!"

10. Aristarchus, who is here in the prison with me, sends his greetings. So does Mark, Barnabas' cousin. You have already received instructions from me that he is to get a hearty welcome should he come your way. 11. Jesus, the one they call Justus, sends his love too. Of all the Jewish Christians here, only these three are actually working with me. But oh, what a help they have been!

GETTING READY
TO SEND
WORD TO
ARCHIPPUS



12. And of course your own Epaphras sends his greetings. He never forgets to pray for you. He is so eager for you to reach maturity and know the will of God in all He has planned for you. 13. I want you to know that he has worked hard for you in prayer, and for the brethren at Laodicea and Hieropolis as well. 14. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas ask to be remembered to you also.



HIEROPOLIS. Hieropolis and Laodicea were about six miles apart facing each other across the Lycus River. Colosse was another ten miles upstream. Hieropolis means "sacred city," and as such was the center of worship for the Phrygian goddess Cybelle. However, it owed its fame to its mineral baths. Dr. Luke, it is believed, served his profession in this area around the time Paul became sick. Consequently it would be in order to refer to his medical profession in writing to men of that region.

15. Please give my greetings to the brethren at Laodicea, also to Nympha and the fellowship which meets in her house. 16. After you read this letter in your church, see that it gets to the church at Laodicea, won't you? Also, my letter to the Laodiceans will be coming to you. Please be sure you get it and read it in your church.



LETTER. Another letter of Paul's, no longer extant, is clearly referred to here. The context indicates that it is his. How else would he know about it or its contents? Nothing is known about it except that it is lost. Paul wrote other letters which we do not have today. But we must not conclude their loss deprives us of something God purposed for His people of today. Neither does it mean that such letters are uninspired, only that God has not seen fit to preserve them.

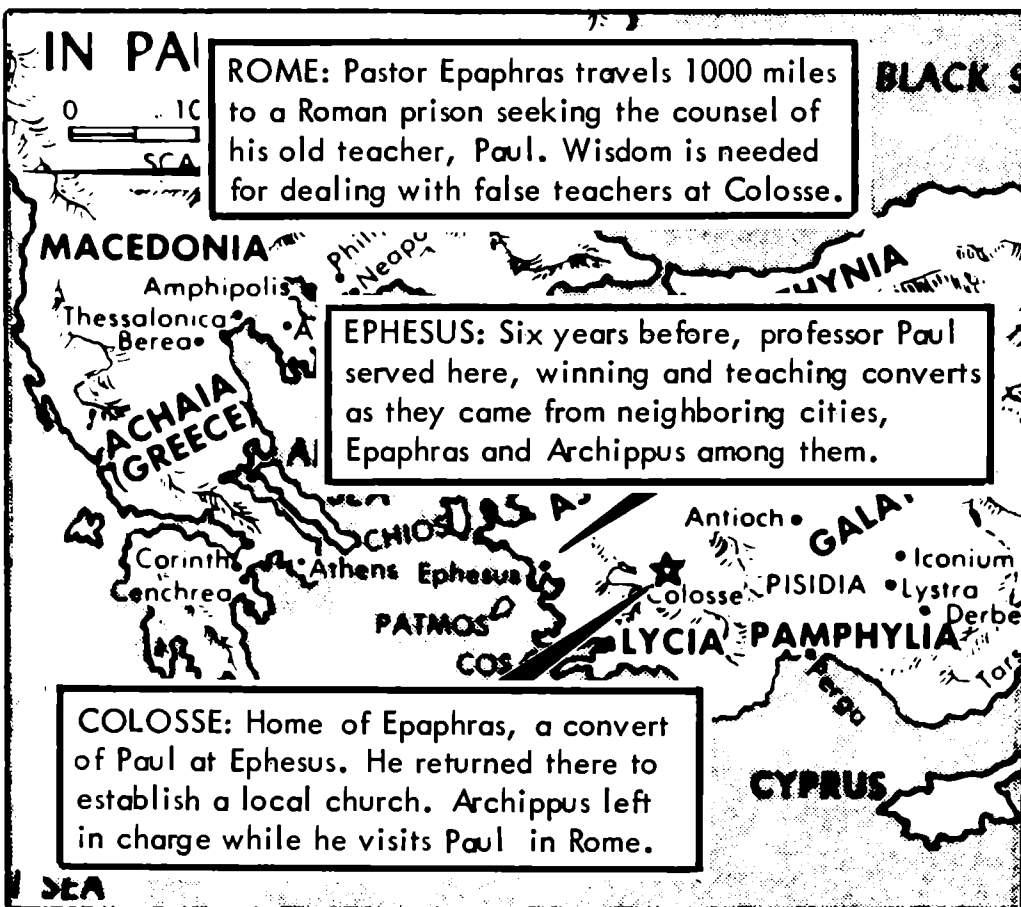
17. Now here are some words for Archippus. Tell him: "Treasure the ministry God has given you. It is most urgent that you do your best to fulfill it."



ARCHIPPUS. When Epaphras departed from Colosse to visit Paul at Rome, someone had to be left in charge. Likely it was Archippus, who had also been schooled under Paul at Ephesus. If so, these words would have great meaning for him, though perhaps veiled to others. Since this is a public letter, read before the church, the phrase would have its own personal meaning to Archippus. Armed with its authority, the letter could amount to credentials signifying he was the one to lead the faithful away from the false teachers. With Epaphras still in prison with Paul, unable to return to his church and do the job himself, the task appears to have fallen on Archippus. In that case, he would understand the phrase to mean, "You're the only one there I can count on to protect the people from the false teachers. It would be disastrous for them if you fail to accept the responsibility."

18. Here is my personal greeting written in my own hand. Please remember me as the prisoner of the Lord. His grace be with you all.

PAUL



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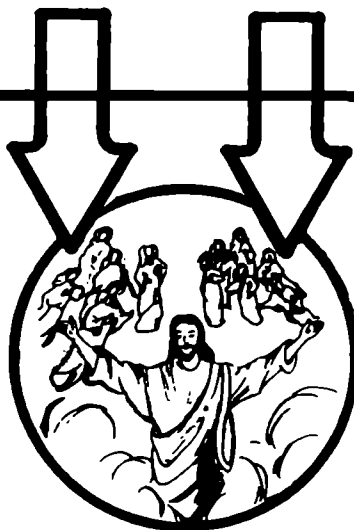
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I & II THESSALONIANS

AMAZING COUNSEL
FOR A BABY CHURCH

HEAVEN
Lord now with O.T. & N.T. saints
who have fallen asleep (2 Cor. 5:8)

"The Lord
Himself will
descend from
Heaven with
a shout. . ."
(1 Thess. 4:16)



"BRING
with Him
those who have
fallen asleep
in Jesus."
(1 Thess. 4:14)

". . .we which are alive
and remain shall be
caught up. . ."
(1 Thess. 4:17)



EARTH
people with the Lord
—bodies only in ground (2 Cor. 5:8)

Dear Friends:

Three missionaries, deported from the city of Philippi, go directly to the City of Thessalonica. There they preach for three weeks in the Jewish synagogues. Their audiences consisted of large numbers of Gentiles who had turned to Judaism. While the Jews rejected the missionaries' preaching, these Gentile converts flocked to Christ in great numbers. Crowds of pagans were also attracted to Jesus as a result. The town was quickly turned upside down with a rush of souls to the Lord. In several months a large vigorous church was born.

Satan's opposition was just as fast. The hatred of the Jews was furious. Their efforts to expel the missionaries were successful and the founders of this new church had to leave town before the new converts could be thoroughly grounded. Miles away, in Athens, Paul feared much of his work would collapse as the persecution fires raged against this new church. Did the church survive? Indeed. The church was quickly set "on fire" itself. This was the greatest revival Paul ever held.

The fascination of his letter lies in the profound counsel Paul is giving to a baby church. Only a few months old, it is receiving instruction concerning the rapture of the saints, the operation of spiritual gifts, and remarkable references to the person of Satan. What is more astonishing is that almost none of Paul's teaching in these matters is found in even the most advanced churches of our day. Perhaps the Spirit of God will use this treatment of His Word to refocus our attention on these solemn matters.

This rephrasing, which emphasizes the apostle's intention rather than trying to restate word equivalents from the Greek text, reveals the story of this amazing church. You'll like the questions which transport you into Paul's presence. You become a citizen of the First Century as you read. The insight paragraphs provide background information not usually available to the average reader.

C. S. LOVETT

THESS Intro

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I THESSALONIANS

1 1. Greetings from Paul, Silas and Timothy — to the church assembled at Thessalonica which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ — Grace to you and peace.



CHURCH. What's unusual about this greeting? Nothing—until you realize no church existed at Thessalonica some weeks before. It was a miracle church spawned of what was perhaps the greatest revival Paul ever held. He became famous for the results of the Thessalonian revival. More astonishing, is the way this newly founded church went on to earn its own fantastic reputation even though Paul was forced to leave town shortly after he founded it.

2. We overflow with thanksgiving as we mention all of you to God during our prayer time. 3. And while in the presence of God, we picture the great work you are doing because of your faith; the way you toil at it out of love for Him; and the amazing persistence you have shown because the hope of Jesus' coming is so alive in you. 4. Thus it is that we are convinced God loves you as His own — yea, even certain that He has chosen you!



GREAT WORK. What a way to be remembered! Though brand new, this church roared into action fired by the vision of Jesus' coming. These Christians were not the "sit and listen" type—they moved! Without hesitation they started to witness, a further testimony to the Spirit's miracle in them. When news of their enthusiasm in Christ reached the anxious Paul, he was nearly beside himself with praise to God. His letter is emotion-packed with thanksgiving and affection for his Thessalonian Christians.

"Could just a few sermons affect people that much!"

5. We brought the Gospel to you with more than sermons. The power of the Holy Spirit was with our message and He Himself applied the conviction to your hearts. We were aware of this as we preached. Further, you know how we conducted ourselves among you for your sake. Our behaviour was proof of our integrity.



YOUR SAKE. All kinds of roving philosophers traveled the world in those days. Like Gypsy side-shows, they plied their oratorical skills to entertain for money. No movies or TV in those days. People flocked to hear clever speakers. In contrast, the three founders of this church accepted nothing for their work, proving they ministered solely for the sake of the people. The difference was startling evidence of the Apostles' sincerity, greatly reinforcing their testimony.

"How could the Thessalonians witness so fervently before they were built up in the faith!"

6. So mighty was the Spirit's work in you that you became imitators of us. You copied our obedience as Apostles, much as we copy the Lord, the real Apostle of the Father. Consequently you also suffered, yet the joy of the Holy Spirit was more than adequate compensation.



PERSECUTION. The Thessalonian Jews were jealous of Paul and sought to extinguish the infant church. They had bribed the rabble to riot, then used political intrigue to have the church leaders placed under a peace bond (Acts 17:5-9). Paul was forced to leave. Even so the church flourished in his absence as the resentful Jews stirred fierce enmity against her. The new Christians were so on fire for Christ, their zeal couldn't be dampened. Jesus was coming, what else mattered!

7. So dramatic were the changes in you and so effective was your witnessing, that you be-

came examples to believers throughout all Greece. 8. You have become a sound amplifying system which blares the message of the Lord beyond Macedonia and Achaia — to every place where your words can travel. So widespread is your story we don't have to speak of it. People already know about it.



COMMUNICATIONS. News spread fast from Thessalonica. A great seaport on the Aegean Sea and dissected by the main highway to Rome, commerce flowed through the city. The new church took advantage of its strategic location. The Greek text implies the news spread with gushing enthusiasm—something like word of the California Gold Rush! In this case it was, "Jesus lives! He's coming! You'd better get ready!"

"What was so dramatic about their conversion?"

9. People tell us about you. We hear from them the details of our coming to you solely to bring you the Word of God and what it did in your lives. Most staggering is how you turned, practically over night, from the traditional dead idols to serve the Living and True God!



IDOLS. Idol manufacturing was a huge business in Thessalonica. Idol worship saturated the lives. Long established traditions, such as we find in Asia today were suddenly abandoned. 50 miles to the S.W., Mt. Olympus was the celebrated home of the gods. However the Holy Spirit opened their eyes to see them as dead. Never was Zeus or any of the false gods spoken of as coming to deliver people from sin and judgment. But Jesus was alive. They could feel His Spirit BURNING in their hearts. This never happened before in the case of the idols.

10. Particularly do they tell us how you eagerly await the coming of His Son from

heaven — the same Jesus who was raised from the dead and who is now delivering us from the wrath to come!



AWAIT. This is no passive, "I believe Jesus is coming soon." Far from the quiet expectation found in some modern circles, this speaks of active preparation, much as you might furiously tidy your house in advance of an important visitor. It has more to do with changes in one's life than doctrine. The wrath spoken of here refers to the eternal damnation hanging over the heads of all unbelievers—hell.

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1. Yes, my brothers, you yourselves can vigorously testify that our visit to you was anything but a failure.
2. We had been shamefully treated and insulted at Philippi, as you know, even before we got to Thessalonica. Yet God gave us the courage to come to you with the Gospel regardless of any opposition which might await us there.
3. And how is it we could be so fearless? Our appeal to you did not employ error. Our motives were pure, therefore we could count on the Spirit's witness to back us up. We didn't have to use trickery in getting you to turn to Christ.



TRICKERY. Paul is defensive here. Charges had been made against him. His enemies were saying he was a deluded man, going about deceiving people for purely selfish reasons. The Jews wanted to discredit him as a man of God, thinking his message would die along with his popularity. It was a simple matter for them to claim that Paul was just another of the swindlers, fakers and philosophers who used subtle tricks to deceive audiences.

4. Since God Himself has carefully tested us, we come to you approved by Him. Can't you

see why it is more important for us to please God with our words than men? He can look upon our hearts to behold our motives. And if they are not absolutely pure, His witness will not back up our words. And His witness is our strength.

"Yes, but such charges still have to be answered, don't they?"

5. Indeed. As you well know, we never came to you with any kind of flattery such as men normally use to cloak their greed. God Himself is witness to our honesty. 6. Did it ever once appear that we were seeking human praise, either from you or anyone else? No, and this in spite of the fact that we could have exerted considerable authority as Apostles of Christ. 7. Instead, we restrained ourselves and moved very gently among you, showing that we really cared for you. A nurse couldn't cherish a child of her own with any more care.



AFFECTION. The missionaries walked softly among the people. They were easy to approach and talk to. Gracious and discounting their authority, they placed the interest of the Thessalonians above their own. In sharp contrast to the roving philosophers, they were like father and mother, tenderly winning them to Jesus and caring for them with a personal follow-up that offered the warmest counsel.

8. Sure, we admit we were out to get you, but not to take anything from you. We sought to put something into your lives. So affectionately did we desire you that we were ready to give you our very lives as well as the Gos-

pel. 9. You remember, don't you, how we worked with our own hands? We labored and toiled night and day so that our financial support would not burden any of you as we preached God's message to you.



SUPPORT. Paul believed it proper to "live by the Gospel," consequently he did accept offerings from the Philippian church. But he always weighed what the effect of taking money from the churches would have on the Gospel. In this case he decided not to. The traveling philosophers would never show such consideration, thus Paul could exploit the contrast. Besides, working for a living was held in low regard. The Holy Spirit would use Paul to dignify honest labor. Later he will be saying, "If a man won't work, neither let him eat!"

10. Therefore both you and God can testify that our conduct before you believers was pure, honest and above criticism. 11. From your own knowledge you can state that we were like fathers, dealing with you personally — encouraging you — comforting you — exhorting each of you 12. to live lives worthy of God's invitation. And what is His invitation? To share in the splendor of His kingdom. 13. Thus you can understand how thankful we are that when you heard us preach the Word of God, you accepted it, recognizing it as God's own message and not any man's. Now it is powerfully at work in the lives of you who believe.

"Is that why Satan attacked this church so furiously?"

14. When you brethren suffered persecution at the hands of your countrymen, you were imitating the experience of the churches of

God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. You know how they received persecution from the Jews. You walk in the same noble path.



FAMILIAR STORY. Wherever Christianity flourished, persecution followed. And always it was the result of the relentless warfare which began in Genesis 3:15. Backstage, Satan engineers Christian persecution. It is impossible to be vigorous for Christ and avoid every form of persecution. The Thessalonians had "imitated" the Apostles' willingness to spread the Gospel, now they were imitating them in the sufferings which followed. Paul seeks to comfort them by observing that they are also imitating the walk of the mother church at Jerusalem, thus sharing in her honor.

15. These Jews killed not only the Lord Jesus, but also the prophets. And they drove us out. Oh how they displease God and continue to reveal themselves hostile to all mankind!



JEWS. Paul's statement here quashes modern attempts to exonerate the Jews of killing Christ. In the Greek, the words "Lord" and "Jesus" are clearly separated to stress the fact that it was the manifested God who was slain. Paul's reference to the prophets, then the Saviour, then the Apostles, shows he is viewing the Jews historically. When he says they "displease God" and are "hostile to all mankind" (both terrible understatement), he beholds them as perpetually in rebellion against God, a nation with a strong hatred against all others.

16. Even now they are trying to stop us from preaching salvation to the non-Jews. It would seem they must always provoke God to the limit so as to kindle His worst rage against them. Perhaps this will be their last act of rebellion, seeing His wrath has finally come upon them.



WRATH. As a nation, the Jews have always been rebellious. From Egypt to Canaan, during the time of the Judges, the reigns of the Kings, the ministry of Christ and the early spreading of the Gospel, they fought God all the way. Soon to have their temple destroyed (A.D. 70), blinded by God "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," they were still kicking against His work. For almost 2000 years the Jews have been tasting this wrath. Were it not for God's promise to Abraham, they would have vanished from the earth. Even so, the nation has yet to suffer one more spanking, "The time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:4-9). A remnant will be saved which finally acknowledges Jesus as King. God eventually wins Israel as a nation.

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17. But as for us brethren, having been torn away from you for a little while, though our separation is purely physical — never in heart — we were seized with an overwhelming desire to visit you again. We've tried every way possible to come to you in person. 18. So great was our longing that I, Paul, tried to get back to you more than once — but Satan prevented it.



SATAN. Few today suspect the power of our living adversary. This one, so much mightier than the Spirit-filled Apostle, was easily able to frustrate his noble ambition to return to Thessalonica. Are you aware, dear reader, that he lives to render your life useless to Christ? Ever wonder why certain thoughts cross your mind? Why you fail to witness when you should, why you are so far from being what you long to be in Christ? Satan lives and hinders your life as fully as he did Paul's.

"Why so eager to get back to Thessalonica!"

19. What do we have to show for our work if it isn't you? When the Lord Jesus comes, you will be our only prize displayed in His presence. Our hope of exultation, you see, rests

in you. 20. For you are our pride and joy! Our future is wrapped up in you — we just have to see you again!



FUTURE. God doesn't carry a wallet, His treasure is people. The wealth of heaven is people. Paul knows that those whom he wins and cultivates in Christ make up his "reward" and constitute his "treasure in heaven" (Matt. 6:20). Of course he deeply loves the Thessalonians, but they are also his investment. His whole life has been poured into people—the same as Jesus'!

3 1. The separation was getting intolerable. So when we couldn't stand it any longer, we decided that even if I had to remain at Athens alone, 2. it was best to send our brother Timothy to you. As a fellow minister of the Gospel of Christ, he is well able to encourage you and reinforce your faith. 3. We didn't want any of you to be deceived into giving up, just because trouble followed your faith. This very thing, as you know, is a part of God's plan.



CONCERN. Paul and his companions weren't absolutely sure whether all the results of the revival were due to sweeping emotional reaction or genuine faith. They had to leave Thessalonica too soon to be certain. Meanwhile the converts were suffering persecution. The character of their faith was being put to the test. Did they really understand that tribulation was a part of God's plan? If genuine, would their meager faith survive? Timothy was sent to find out.

4. When we were with you didn't we continually mention ahead of time that we are to suffer affliction? Well, it has happened — as you are now so vividly aware. 5. You can see why I couldn't bear the separation any

longer. I just had to find out about your faith. I was afraid the tempter might have tempted you and then all of our hard work would have been for nothing.



TEMPTER. Paul's devil was real. The Apostle rightly feared him as a vicious opponent. Those denying Satan's personal existence might as well be honest and admit they don't believe the Bible. The evil seducer was making capital of the persecutions . . . "Now you've done it! Look what's happening to you! You've upset the established gods. Forget this new, untried way. It's not worth the suffering!" Would the Thessalonians listen to that? Would their faith withstand this onslaught of suggestion? He had to know.

"You did finally hear from Thessalonica, didn't you!"

6. But now Timothy has just returned bringing us a glowing report of your faith. He says that you cherish the thought of us and long to see us, just as much as we long to see you.

7. You can't imagine how this word of your faith cheers us in the midst of our own stresses and afflictions. 8. Just to hear that you are standing fast — oh, this is life for us — really living. You see, life has nothing else for us now that we have forsaken everything for the Gospel.



WORRIER! Paul wasn't given to worry, but Satan constantly plagued him with the notion . . . "You wasted your time at Thessalonica. Those people were ready for a change. They didn't really turn to Christ, they just got excited about a new teaching. Their faith isn't real." As time went by, Satan's repeated suggestions took root. Paul was worried. He wasn't one to doubt God's ability, but like anyone he fell victim to satanic suggestion when the circumstances are ripe enough to make one vulnerable. You can feel his great relief in these passages.

"Say, you really were relieved, weren't you!"

9. How can we ever thank God enough for all the joy you have given us? On account of you we continually rejoice before Him
 10. night and day, praying that He would let us see your faces once more and supply that which is deficient in your faith. We ache to have this privilege.



DEFICIENT. These are very new converts. Paul didn't have time to ground them thoroughly. See his grief at being unable to thank God enough for the joy that now fills him. Timothy's report gave him a new lease on life, but that doesn't keep him from asking for more. Observe how he prays as hard as he works . . . "night and day." He burns with the desire to get back to them. Knowing how Satan was working, he was most anxious to acquaint them with "his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

"What is it you want so desperately for these Thessalonians!"

11. First, that it might be in the plan of God, who is both our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, to bring us to you directly. 12. Then, whether or not He permits us to revisit you, He will give you a love for each other that is so overflowing it spills onto all men. Then you'd know the kind of love we have for you. Why do we want this for you?



PAROUSIA. Paul is about to speak of the coming of the Lord. He uses the Greek word, "Parousia," which means: "being beside" or "personal presence." In Paul's day it was an expression for a well known event—a royal visit from a king or emperor. Great pageantry accompanied such a visit, there were feasts and ceremonies. Excitement filled the air, work stopped, coins were struck and everyone celebrated. It was a happy time. Paul employs the word to speak of the arrival of heaven's King, the Lord Jesus. The Thessalonians were familiar with the grandeur and pomp that surrounded a kingly visit.

13. So that you may stand boldly in the presence of God our Father, your hearts free from every fault, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.



BOLDLY. See the hint of judgment which attends Christ's coming? It will be no small thing to feel bold in God's presence when He comes from heaven. Such will be possible only for those who have obeyed and have been winning and building souls for Jesus. Christians are bondslaves under orders. The degree to which a man will be able to relax and enjoy himself (and feel bold) in that great day, will be directly proportional to how he has carried out his Master's command. Sadly, a host of modern saints will shrink from Him in shame, rather than be excited about meeting Him (1 John 2:28).

4 1. In this regard, my brothers, we request — in fact we insist — that you follow the instructions we gave you in the Lord as to how to walk before God and please Him. Yes, you are doing nicely as it is, but we would have you to excel even more. 2. You see the things we taught you were actually commands from the Lord Jesus Christ.



COMMANDS. Paul is about to deal with a serious matter, hence he uses stirring language. "Commands," a strong military term in the Greek, requires implicit obedience. He felt this young church would receive his admonition in the right spirit, desiring to please God. The authority is the Lord, not man. Paul is saying, "Since this is the will of God, let it be yours also."

3. God expects your lives to become progressively holier. Therefore you must keep yourselves from every type of immorality.



IMMORALITY. The gods of the Thessalonians were licentious, self-pleasing rakes vaunted for their sexual misdeeds. The people would be like their gods. Consequently the heathen lived in utter immorality. Lust dominated their souls. This was a sailor's town, a soldier's town, with self-gratification the core of its life. Marriage was a joke, with wives and daughters fair game for anyone who could get them. Obviously, the new life in Christ stood in startling contrast.

4. Further, each of you should know how to select a wife and treasure her in sanctity and honor, 5. not using marriage as a means for exhausting your passions like the heathen. Since they know not God, they don't know any other life. 6. Consequently, you are not to defraud a brother by violating his marriage. We have mentioned these things before, but this time I must solemnly warn you, the Lord is an Avenger in these things.



VIOLATE. Marriage was something of an inconvenience. With the false gods ridiculing marriage, the people couldn't take it seriously. What a shock it must have been for them to learn that God Himself had not only instituted marriage, but demanded it be kept sacred. To hear that He would punish violators was a staggering idea. The old gods advocated adultrous acts, committing them themselves. Here was a new idea, a whole new concept for the Thessalonian Christians. This is why he began with the Lord's command.

"Could the Thessalonians be expected to shift to this new idea very fast!"

7. Has God called us to lives of impurity? Just the opposite. We've been lifted into an entirely new sphere of living — holiness.

8. Thus any man ignoring this counsel is not spurning the word of a man, but rejecting the very God who gives us His Holy Spirit. It is the gift of the Spirit, the Holy One, that makes a holy life possible.



NEW SPHERE. Holiness was a brand new way of life for these people. In being like their old gods, they were formerly wanton and self-pleasing. Now the True God commands . . . "Be ye holy for I the Lord your God am holy!" His worshippers are to be like Him! A pagan can't do this. For, without the Holy Spirit, he is trapped within his fallen, ungodly nature. But a miracle occurs at salvation. The sinner receives the Holy Spirit, creating in him a new nature—a holy one—by means of which he can live a holy life, if he wants to.

"Does this new life of holiness include loving one another!"

9. Indeed, but when it comes to brotherly love it is hardly necessary for me to write to you about that. God Himself teaches you to love one another. 10. In fact, you are already expanding your love so well, it now includes all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia. Even so, it is something in which I want you to excel still more.



MORE LOVE. Inasmuch as "We are all baptized into one body," (1 Cor. 12:13), each Christian is inextricably joined to every other Christian. True, it is a spiritual bond, but who doesn't **unconsciously** sense it? One evidence of salvation is the new Christian's longing to be with other Christians. This love is a feeble grace at first, but it can be cultivated. In fact we are responsible to see that it is. Paul hints at imperfections in their relationships when he asks them to excel in this grace.

11. We trust that you are really trying to live quiet lives, minding your own business

and making your own living, just as we instructed you earlier. 12. You can see why it is important to have the respect of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone. They judge the Gospel by our conduct.



QUIET LIVES. What church needs people with nothing to do but cause trouble? Almost every church seemingly has its fanatics, busybodies and loafers. The Thessalonian church was no exception. The immediate expectation of Christ's coming led some enthusiasts to neglect their work becoming dependent on others. Paul senses the problem. While he encouraged their anticipation of the Parousia, he disapproved using it as an excuse for neglecting one's work.

"Say, how about those who die, won't they miss the Lord's coming!"

13. Brethren, we just can't have you ignorant about those who are falling asleep in death. It won't do to have you displaying pagan grief, with all the wretched agonies and ceremonies of those who have no hope.



IGNORANCE. This always makes for superstition, fear and excess grief. Timothy must have reported a little concern over believing friends who had died. Obviously they had not yet been taught the part the believing dead have in the Lord's return. Paul wasn't about to let his Thessalonian Christians participate in pagan hopelessness. It would deny and disgrace the Gospel. So, as with the Philippians, he used a bomb of doctrinal insight to settle the matter, viz., Philippians 2:6-8. He is about to unveil the truth of the rapture.

14. Now we believe that Jesus died and rose again, don't we? Is it any harder to believe that God will bring with Jesus all who have fallen asleep in Him?



BRING. Lay hold of this vital word. Jesus is on His way someplace. To "bring" these souls with Him, they must first be **with Him**, cf., "absent from the body . . . present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). Thus, when Christ appears "with all His saints" (3:13), the dead in Christ will be **with Him**. But as to the day of Jesus' return (the parousia), Paul now wishes to make it absolutely clear that all believers will participate in it, whether dead or alive. He is going to show God's impartiality by stating that there will be no advantage in being alive when Jesus comes.

15. This we can state by direct revelation, that we who remain alive unto the coming of the Lord, shall have no advantage whatsoever over those who fall asleep. We definitely will not go ahead of them.



ASLEEP. This is Paul's unique way of picturing the harmlessness of death in Christ. Jesus' resurrection reveals the death experience to be perfectly harmless. It didn't hurt Lazarus. This verse is not teaching soul-sleep, but refuting pagan despair at bereavement time. From the **human side**, death resembles sleep. If so, who agonizes because a loved one is taking a nap? From the divine side, the departed saint is very busy in his new life. Paul's point: inordinate grief is out of place for those with such insight. Observe that Paul expected to be alive at Jesus' return.

"Will this be an event everyone can see?"

16. Yes. And here's how it will come about. There will be a shouted command, a call from the archangel, a blast from God's trumpet and — the **LORD HIMSELF** will descend from heaven! Then (the bodies of) those who died believing in Christ, will rise first.



HIMSELF. This is the grand premiere, the parousia which features the Lord **IN PERSON!** Since it is a personal appearance, the shout is very likely His own, for it is His voice that empties graves (John 5:28). The

archangel's call perhaps signals the change which occurs in the bodies of the living (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:51-53), while the trumpet, an ancient means for calling a solemn assembly, probably convenes the host before the Lord. "Rise first" refers to the bodies of the "sleeping dead." It can't mean souls, for the Lord is going to "BRING" them with Him. However it is a clue that the glorified body may bear a striking resemblance to the old one. In that case, "Rise first" is an excellent metaphor.

"What happens to us?"

17. Next, we who are still alive and on the earth, will be snatched away. When we are joined together with them, a cloud of saints will meet the Lord in the sky! From that moment on, we will all be with the Lord — forever!



CLOUD. This is the rapture, the instantaneous change and removal of the living saints to join the host in the sky. Our bodies will be changed in a flash. We will be transformed from the natural to the glorified form in "the twinkling of an eye!" The trumpet sound no doubt heralds the sight in the sky. The great number of saints will have the appearance of a cloud, which Jesus said would be the sign of His coming (Matt. 24:30). This rapture fulfills God's promise that "When He shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). The Greek word for sky indicates the lower atmosphere. After the appearance, the descent will be gradual as per Acts 1:11.

18. Now that you have this knowledge, use it to console and encourage one another.



CONSOLE. Paul has written to dispel ignorance. Despair and fear vanish before such insight. Any grief at bereavement time should now dissipate quickly in the certain knowledge of rejoining friends. No one is going to be disadvantaged by death. God has no favorites in any age. All of His people are to be present to behold His glory in that day. However—while all will be there, not all will enjoy it equally. For you see it is also a time of judgment!

5 1. Now concerning the how long and when of all this, my brethren, there is no point in my writing to you. 2. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night.



HOW-WHEN. Believers have always asked, "When is the Lord coming? How long must we wait?" Paul had already made clear to them the Master's teaching that we are not "to know the times or seasons" (Acts 1:7).

A bit of reflection would show they are pondering something they already know accurately. They were taught that Jesus' return would be sudden, but not immediate. Paul has no reason to write about this, there's nothing more he can add.

"Does that mean people are going to be surprised?"

3. One of these days, when people are saying, "All is quiet and safe!" — destruction will hit them as suddenly as the labor pains of an expectant mother. Escape will be impossible.



SUDDENLY. A man tipped off about a thief gets ready for him. He sets a watch. Here is neglected truth. With the exact time of Christ's return purposely concealed, the focus is on **preparation**. Christians know the day is coming, hence they are to spend themselves getting ready for it. The world, however, will be relaxing in pleasure "as in the days of Noah." They will scoff at the idea of Jesus' coming, then—bang! Judgment falls. God's people must not be caught napping, there are no make up classes in Christianity.

4. However, brethren, since you are no longer in the dark about this, that day must not take you by surprise. You are to watch for it.

5. Having been born of the Light of the World, you are now day people. No longer do any of us have to feel about in spiritual darkness, unable to comprehend the things of

God. We can behold spiritual things, we know what is coming.



LIGHT-DARKNESS. In the Greek, Paul employs a striking Hebraism, sons of light versus sons of darkness. Having been born of the **LIGHT OF THE WORLD**, they too are lights (Matt. 5:14). The moment that happened they were lifted out of the **NIGHT** of this world, to become members of God's family. The unsaved, living still in the blind, sinful family of Satan cannot see the working of God in human affairs. The coming day will be a shock to them. But Christians are different. Knowing about that day, they should also **BE** different.

"How does that knowledge make us any different from anyone else?"

6. Therefore we must act like day people and be free of the spiritual drowsiness which numbs and blinds the rest of mankind. We are to be fresh, wide-awake and alert. 7. Sleeping is done at night. But that's when the night people get drunk and dissipate themselves. It's no wonder they are dull in the daytime. 8. Since we belong to the day, let us be coldly sober, ready for spiritual battles, wearing faith and love for a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.



READY. Picture a Roman sentry on duty. He's alert, watchful and equipped for his task. That's Paul's idea of Christian preparation both for spiritual battles and the Lord's coming. The Christian is not to occupy himself with prophetic lectures, but go to work on personal holiness and obedience. Satan would shift our eyes to the doctrinal excitement of Jesus' coming, rather than preparation for that day when we will stand before our Lord. Jesus' coming is a critical event, not a doctrinal curio.

9. This hope of salvation, you see, is based on the fact that God has no intention of let-

ting us experience His wrath. To the contrary, He chose us to be delivered from it through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10. whose death was for our sake. He died so that whether we are "awake" or "asleep," we might be in fellowship with Him forever!

"What an exciting truth! Is anything more important than learning of this day!"

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11. In view of all this, my brethren, continue to encourage one another. Keep on building each other up at the personal level, even as you have been doing.



PERSONAL BUILDING. Christianity is largely a person to person program. Pastors are needed to give direction and maintain unity, but the loveliest expressions of the Christ-life are seen as God's people care for each other. When one Christian reminds another of the Lord's presence and soon coming, the result is purifying. Christianity is shared, not just proclaimed. Comforts, sympathies and personal testimonies provide living encouragement. As various parts of the human body operate to serve the whole, so do individual Christians have personal functions that can never be replaced by pulpits or pastors.

"Does the personal ministry weaken or dilute the pastoral ministries?"

12. I want you to appreciate those who work among you as spiritual leaders, for God has appointed them to instruct you and have charge over you in the Lord. 13. The very nature of their work requires that you love them and hold them in high esteem. So hear me on this and be at peace among yourselves.



LEADERS. Paul was a great organizer. He delegated authority within the new church so that it functioned even though he had to make a hasty departure. Obviously some at Thessalonica were unwilling to be led or follow the rules laid down. When he says, "Be at peace among yourselves," he is telling them to stop criticizing their leaders and respect them. A little thought would show that their gifts qualified them for leadership tasks within the fellowship.

"Do you have certain personal ministries in mind here?"

14. We urge you brethren: warn the unruly, encourage the fearful, help the weak. But in the exercise of these disciplines, be patient with them all. Before you reject a person first try to restore him.



OFFENDERS. You find these in any church. The unruly: those who hate to keep in step, usually they are fanatics, busybodies and loafers. The fearful: those perpetually agonized over finances, health, their spiritual stature, and in this case, departed loved ones. The weak: possibly in moral matters, but also immaturities, i.e., temper and quick tongues. One class is manifestly warned, the other encouraged, the last counseled. These are all seen as opportunities for the personal ministries as distinct from clergy tasks.

15. Patience is needed in dealing with each other. Therefore see to it that none of you repays the evil deed of a brother with an evil act of your own. No matter what anyone does to you, brother or not, find a way to do him good. Why? This is the kind of behaviour that flows from love. This is the way to be like Christ.

"What else besides patience is to be outwardly displayed!"

16. Show your cheerfulness in the Lord continually. That is, rejoice always. 17. Don't

let anything interfere with your prayer life. 18. Regardless of what happens to you, whether tragedy or blessing, thank God for it. In this way you will be the kind of a Christian that thrills God. Now do all these things not just because I say so, but because it is the will of God for you.



THREE SPECIFICS: Paul cites three aspects of the believer's walk: (1) **Cheeriness.** God delights not only in the cheerful giver, but the one whose joy and enthusiasm warms others. A depressed saint is often lifted by the presence of a joyous brother. (2) **Prayer.** The Greek says, "Pray without intermission." There are to be no prayerless gaps in walking with Christ. Prayer, which is soul-breathing, should be as steady as body-breathing. (3) **Thanksgiving.** Nothing can be truly adverse for the one in Christ. Claiming Romans 8:28, we can give thanks for **everything**. Here is the forgotten element in God's formula for the worry free life. If we don't thank Him for what He is doing, why should He do more?

"What about the operation of the gifts of the Spirit in the church?"

19. Do not quench the working of the Holy Spirit by stifling the exercise of supernatural gifts before the congregation.



QUENCH. The church age began and may be ending with manifestations of supernatural gifts. Certain of them, prophesying, tongues and interpretations and discernment of spirits, were going full blast in this new church. There was no Bible, no literature, no hymnology, and Paul was forced to leave soon after its founding. Thus God supplied these miraculous supports to certify and insure its establishment. As always, though, Satan had his false gifts going too. Some enthusiasts, carried away with the idea of Jesus' quick return, were exaggerating Paul's words with "messages." Confusion resulted. With unity and authority threatened, the presiding ministers were tempted to forbid all free utterances. But Paul says no, lest you also quench the Spirit's operation.

20. Prophesying must not be downgraded.



PROPHESYING. Because the speaker's message was understood, Paul ranked this as the greatest gift (1 Cor. 14:1). This supernatural "voice" was "quick and powerful" and brought a holy fear to the assembly, reminding saints and leaders alike of God's all-seeing eye. The gift was God speaking through a man, not only of future things, but present matters of holiness and discipline. It was accompanied by a **peculiar burning** in a listener's heart. This was the real flame of the Thessalonian church and Paul feared the forbidding of the gifts might extinguish this one. Some despised its convicting power, others exalted the more showy gifts. But Paul warns, "Don't put out this light!" It was urgent that God's Spirit be allowed to develop His communications freely. Sadly though, it was soon driven out of the professing church.

21. Even so you must test everything that is said so that you may discern that which is of the Lord and therefore good. 22. But at the same time you want to shun that which is false and therefore evil.



TEST. Paul carefully added this word. Don't quench the manifestations, but make them stand the **TEST** that they are of God. None was to be taken as genuine merely because it **professed** to be inspired. When the gifts are in operation (any church-any age) a particular gift must be present—"the discerning of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10). This was to qualify the words spoken as being of God or Satan. In our time, with the approach of anti-christ and the upsurge of false spirits, this could be the most critical gift of all. Much warmth in Christianity has disappeared where ceremonialism has been so strict as to deny Him freedom to work through individual gifts. The exhortation here is—don't quench, but **TEST**.

"Aren't people easily misled in situations like this?"

23. Yes. Therefore in all these things may the God of peace Himself so thoroughly sanctify each of you, that your spirit and soul and

body will be found flawless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to greet Him with boldness. 24. He who has called you to this holy life, is also faithful to keep His Word. What He promises, He does.



SANCTIFY. When trouble arises in a church, God must help His people. It is easy to be swept along where there are excesses and extremes. The surge of heated enthusiasms can engulf people in body, soul and spirit.

While it is not always a "holy roller" situation, great evil can be done by aroused imaginations and careless lips. In those situations, the God of Peace (the opposite of confusion) must help His children keep their eyes on Him so as to separate themselves from evil. Paul is again hinting at a Judgment attending Christ's return. Can the boy who hasn't obeyed his dad eagerly anticipate his homecoming? Those who don't obey Jesus cannot expect to meet Him with great joy!

25. Brethren, pray for us.

26. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

27. I solemnly charge you before the Lord to see that this letter is read aloud to everyone of the brethren.

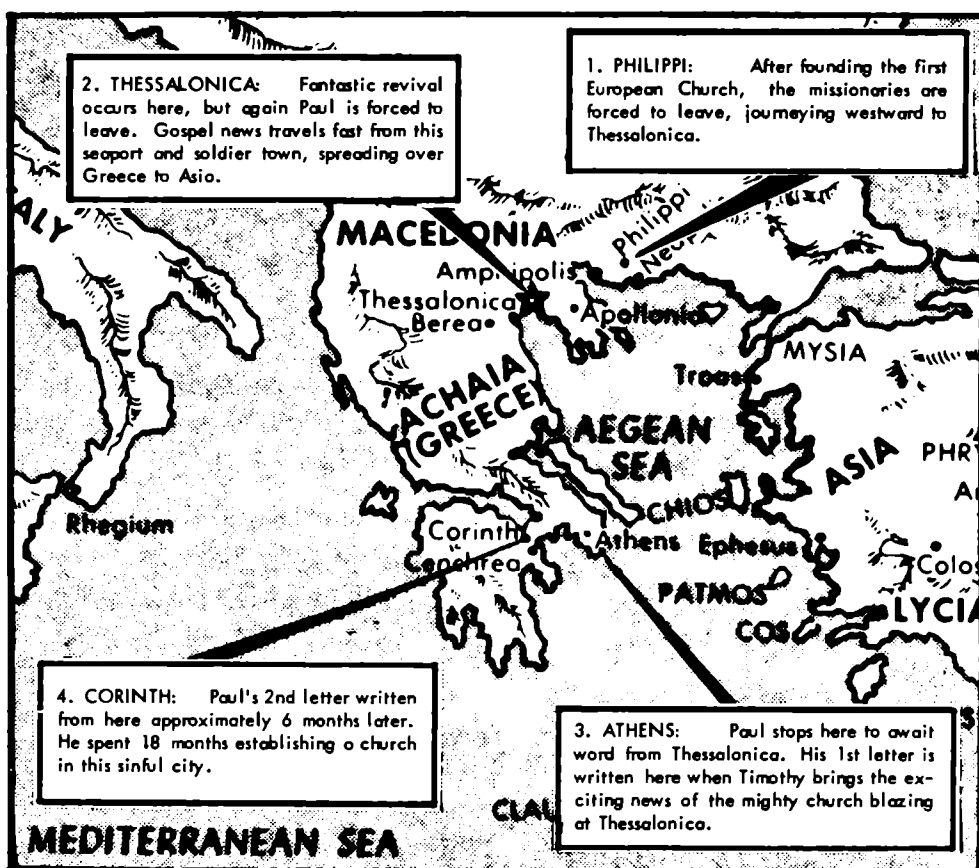


READ ALOUD. The Greek verb implies a single act at a particular time. Besides, most could not read. The earnestness of his adjuration shows that he felt this first letter to be divinely inspired and of great importance. Thus its reading would have a prominence similar to that of the Law and the Prophets in the synagogues. Observe that what Paul commands here, has until recently, been forbidden by Rome. Though this letter deals with problems, nothing was to be handled secretly. All were to hear, even the young.

28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

(Undoubtedly the audience response was . . .
"AMEN.")

PAUL



PAUL, caught up into the Third Heaven,* beheld truths too grand to be fully compressed into human language. His being was so packed with spiritual glories, he frequently drops bombs of insight. Coming upon them is one of the great treats reserved for those who study his letters. To the Philippians, for example, he unloaded the truth of Christ's Self-emptying (descent into humanity) to settle a quarrel between two women in the church (Phil. 2:6-8).

Now to the Thessalonians he has unleashed the rapture-bomb to settle their anxieties concerning departed loved ones. It worked. Perhaps too well, for rapture-fever swept the church. The evil of prophetic-preoccupation set in, bringing with it the tendency toward undisciplined living and an unproductive flitting about with speculations concerning the Lord's return. To reduce their untimely rapture-fever, Paul drops another bomb, unveiling things which must take place before Jesus comes in glory. Such insights are before you now!

*2 Cor. 12:2, 4

II THESSALONIANS

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- 1** 1. Paul, Silas and Timothy—to those in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ — assembled at Thessalonica.
2. May you experience the grace of God our Father and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ!



GRACE-PEACE. So often these terms are reduced to mere symbols of greeting, but Paul wants his dear Thessalonians to **experience** them. Grace is the sanctifying work of God that lets saved sinners live for Christ. Peace is heaven's tranquilizer that permits God's own to relax even while enduring the severest trials. Paul is ever affectionate toward his beloved converts, though now writing to correct errors in doctrine and conduct. Even so he is delighted with their progress since his last letter, written about six months before.

3. We can't help ourselves, we are compelled to thank God for you brethren continually. And it's only right that we should. For your faith has really mushroomed and your sacrificial love for each other greatly abounds.
4. Did you know that we brag about you to the other churches? We tell them of your faith and endurance while going through persecutions. The way you bear up to your trials is so remarkable we are compelled to boast about you.



BOAST. Paul stayed in close touch with all his churches. It was his custom to boast of one church to another. This miracle church at Thessalonica was particularly worthy. Severe trials often find Christians doubting the goodness of the Lord, but these saints were doing the opposite — **trusting Him more**. Satan always seems to keep pace with every advance in faith, consequently their afflictions had in-

creased. Usually people are told, "Come to Jesus and everything will be all right." But God's plan is the reverse. Coming to Christ is like volunteering for active duty in wartime. This truth is not heralded today.

"Are persecutions really a part of God's plan for us!"

5. It is a righteous thing on the part of God to let you endure suffering. Does He not give you the grace and peace to bear it? Beyond that, you are going to be thrilled when you see how He has used your afflictions to make you worthy of a place in His kingdom. Who cannot take suffering for a time, when he knows it is the highway to perfection?



RIGHTEOUS THING. "There ain't no justice," cry the oppressed of the world. Indeed, it is Satan's world (1 John 5:19). Christians are tempted to question God's justice when the godly suffer at the hands of the unjust. But He allows it. The sufferings are needed to produce spiritual graces in our lives. These same graces will make us more at home in His presence later on. A day is coming, though, when all things will be rectified and God's justice vindicated on the earth. What is urgent here, is to see that God is now using suffering to prepare His children for glory.

6. Incidentally, in connection with the justice of God, He is going to repay with affliction, those who are afflicting you. 7. On the other hand, you who are suffering He will bring into sweet rest, the same as He will for us. Of course this all must await the appearing of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels who administer His mighty power. 8. Then, in flaming fire, He will deal out

retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.



FLAMING FIRE. In Scripture fire bespeaks judgment. Since fire is already flame, why the excess in words? Only to reinforce the terrible character of God's judgment with respect to the wicked. Human language cannot communicate the awfulness of it. Yet, even in retribution we see justice. Note how those who have never heard the Gospel are distinguished from those who have heard, but refused to heed it. The plight of the latter is worse.

"What is this awful judgment the angels will execute!"

9. These people will suffer the pangs of eternal exclusion from the presence of the Lord and the majesty of His glory. 10. The terrible nature of this separation will become publicly obvious when Jesus comes to be glorified in those He has made holy. And because you believed our testimony, you will be among those beholding this event!



PANGS. Today some people feel uncomfortable around a Gospel minister. They don't want Christ and the slightest hint of Him, makes them uneasy. Think what they'd feel if He showed up in Person! Christ's coming in glory will be an awful shock to those evil hearts that don't want Him. And the **internal** separation they feel, is but a wee sample of the **eternal** exclusion that awaits. Like Satan, they prefer wickedness to holiness and would rather flee His holy presence than endure it. Unfortunately there is no place to hide. Even death takes them to that hell "prepared for the devil and his angels," where worse pangs await — eternal ones!

11. Now you know what we have in mind when we pray for you. We want God to fulfill

His highest ambitions for you, causing you to mature to the full extent your faith will allow—by means of His power. 12. In this way you will bring great glory to the name of the Lord Jesus, who so willingly shares His glory with you. Only the wondrous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ could conceive of such a thing, let alone make it possible.



GLORIFY. God's glory is not His might and majesty, but His lovely personality, merciful nature and generous spirit. When that same nature is reproduced in us His glory is multiplied. It is a miracle of grace that turns us into "little Christs" bringing praise to His Name. In that day our glory will be great, for He will not only acknowledge us as His sons, but openly display us as such! (1 John 3:1, 2). That same event will reveal to all what His genius has wrought within us, even though it signals eternal disaster for those who do not want Him!

2 1. Now with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to meet Him, I implore you brethren: 2. not to lose your heads or let your good senses be jarred by a spiritual utterance or a predictive message or a letter purporting to be from us which suggests that the day of the Lord is all but here—or has already come!



MESSAGES. Paul's first letter kindled great excitement in the new church. The concern for departed loved ones was quickly forgotten as their focus shifted skyward. Feeling the pinch of fresh persecutions, they could hardly wait for His appearing. Some, wanting to hurry it along, were getting "messages." Others prophesied that Paul's letter really meant Jesus was due any second. Someone, it seems, circulated a letter said to be from Paul which declared the Parousia to be at hand. Paul had to settle the matter and

does so by citing the events which must occur **before** Jesus can arrive in glory.

3. Don't let anyone, I repeat, no one—regardless of any predictive insight he claims—deceive you about this. There are two things which must take place before that day can arrive: the wholesale departure from the faith (the apostasy) and the appearance of a lawless leader who will be sin personified. This advocate of lawlessness, this son of perdition, will be Satan's man.



TWO THINGS. Once more Paul deals with a situation by exploding a bomb of spiritual insight. Before the Lord will appear from ABOVE, a lawless leader will appear from BELOW. Before the gathering unto the Lord, there will be a world-wide gathering unto this champion of evil who hates all law and order except his own. This truth might have even greater significance for us now when the signs of social decay and lawlessness are rapidly mounting.

"In what way is Satan's man connected with the falling away from faith?"

4. This brazen leader, heading the rebellion against God, will despise and abolish everything that has to do with God and the religions of the world, leaving himself as the only object of worship. He will dare to enter God's place in the temple and take over. Not only will he make himself at home there, but he will present himself to the world as God. This is in spite of the fact that he is just a man. 5. I'm sure you recall my telling you this. I spoke of it continually all the time I was with you.



REMEMBER. In the few short weeks he was with them, Paul must have used the Old Testament book of Daniel as a primer for new converts. The truth of the lawless leader has its roots and explanation in that volume. Now he reminds them of the oral instructions he gave, obviously containing much eschatology, the historical conflict of good and evil and God's timetable for judgments. Daniel, which unveils the "times of the Gentiles," helps to open the darker passages of this epistle. Before Jesus comes, a political figure will usurp God's place demanding he be worshipped instead. He will be a counterfeit, yet the world will accept him.

"Why hasn't this man appeared before now?"

6. You also know what restrains him. There is a force at work in the world to keep him from appearing now so that he can be revealed according to God's schedule.



WHAT RESTRAINS. Scripture teaches that governments, social institutions and police restraints are of God (Rom. 13:1-7). Also there is the mysterious working of the human conscience. Without these divinely applied brakes holding back the tide of evil, the earth would have been consumed by sin long ago. Were human depravity to go completely unchecked, all flesh would have disappeared before now. Inasmuch as the lawless leader needs a day of unchecked depravity, he is held back until the sin-brakes are released and evil is allowed to snowball. This is how God holds him in abeyance until He is ready to use him.

"You mean conditions are going to get worse than they are today!"

7. In the meantime, the mystery of lawlessness, that insidious conspiracy against God, continues just as it has from the first day of the satanic revolt. And the one who is responsible for restraining the tide of evil in this world, will continue to do so until God tells

him to release the brakes and stand aside. Evil will then begin to accelerate in the world.



WHO RESTRAINS. As a police force has a chief, justice a judge, an empire an emperor, so does the restraining force at work in the world have a Restrainer. Who is he? Paul said He was at work then. Obviously He has been right up to our time. Someone not bound by time and with the power to restrain universal evil, has to be a supernatural being. The chief point here is not the identification of the Restrainer, but the releasing of the brakes on sin. Paul did identify Him to the Thessalonians, but not to us. The first effects will not be sudden. There will be a gradual gain in momentum as sin accelerates. The brakes could be off even now, for wild rebellious spirits are beginning to surge throughout most countries today.

8. Once this happens the way will be clear for the Lawless One to be revealed. But, when the Lord Jesus comes, He will slay him on the spot, destroying him with the breath of His mouth and glorious appearance!



SLAY. Two enemies meet, "The Truth" and "The Lie." God's man is descending. Satan's man defiantly shakes his fist skyward. Whoof — he's gone! It's one thing to pretend you're God when Jesus is out of sight, another to make it stick when the King of heaven shows up in Person! As darkness must vanish before light, so is the anti-christ vanquished by the appearing of Christ. Paul pauses to say this to assure his suffering Thessalonians that no antagonist is a match for Jesus. The moment the Truth speaks, the Lie is cancelled. Thus the "breath" and "appearance" of Christ combine to eliminate Satan's man.

"What should we look for when Satan's man appears!"

9. When this Lawless Leader is finally allowed to appear, his coming will be sponsored by Satan. He will be filled with the spirit of evil. Also, his arrival will be attended by amazing powers of deception, counterfeit signs and falsely produced wonders.



LAWLESS LEADER. This man, like Martin Luther, will be a product of his times. Luther did not create the Reformation. Europe was already a powder keg. He was the igniting match. With the divine restraints removed, evil will crescendo. Into its ripeness will step Satan's man equipped with supernatural credentials which seemingly justify his claim to godship. The world will adore him. All will be charmed by his flatteries. His promises will thrill mankind. This new idol of evil promises to satisfy man's every dream and passion for lustful satisfaction. As god of fallen humanity, he will lead the masses into horrors of ungodliness. Of course he lies. There is no satisfaction apart from the True God. The result therefore is a fantastic nightmare of tribulation upon the earth.

10. Fully acquainted with the luring power of sin, he will snare all those who prefer wickedness to the Truth of God. Consequently his offers will attract every heart that has refused to love the Truth which could have saved them.



ATTRACT. God purposely sends this man (though Satan thinks it is his idea) into the earth, using him as a **MAGNET** for attracting every heart which has no intention of turning to Christ. This dramatizes once and for all, that human protests against believing the Gospel and receiving Christ were never really genuine. Though living in a beautifully ordered world, these people refused to recognize its unseen Creator. They preferred to think that an unconscious power of nature somehow turned an ape into a man. They wouldn't believe the One who turned water into wine and rose from the dead. Why not? Was it the incredibility of God's Word that motivated their rejection? No. It was their preference for wickedness.

"Why would God permit the appearance of such a man?"

11. See now why God is going to unleash the tide of evil? It is to let this Lawless Leader

appear in the power of Satan with all his deluding influence, inviting men to believe in his false promises and trust in his astonishing offers. They wouldn't believe Christ, who is the Truth. But they will believe this man, who is The Lie. 12. They like what Satan offers through this man. They believe and embrace one who plays god. Why? Because they prefer wickedness to holiness. It was this preference, you see, that always kept them from believing the Truth. Now there is no question about it. Satan's man has been used to dramatize the fact that men believe what they want. God's judgment of these people can never be challenged now.

"Why tell all this to the Thessalonian Christians!"

13. But as for you, beloved brethren of the Lord, we are deeply moved to give thanks to God for you. We praise Him that you were among those chosen from the beginning to be saved and made holy—both by His Holy Spirit and your faith in the Truth.



TRUTH LOVERS. Paul rejoices that his Thessalonians are the opposite from the truth haters. He comforts them, "Those awful people can't really hurt you. You are Jesus' own precious brethren, chosen from the 'foundation of the world.'" Though chosen by God, they were not called until Paul arrived in Thessalonica with the Gospel. Clearly it was the love of the Truth that caused them to embrace God's Man, Jesus. This separates them from the masses of unregenerate who are blinded to the Gospel by their own passion for evil and self-infatuation.

14. And it was His call you heard when we came among you preaching the Gospel—and

here you are, even now enjoying the prospect of sharing in His glory when He appears! 15. So **STAND FIRM**, my brethren. Cling to the truths we taught you, both in our preaching and by letter. Don't let them slip from you.



STAND FIRM. Christians living in the last hours will feel the charm of Satan's man. His deceptive powers will be so fantastic, even the very elect could be deceived (Matt. 24:24). Not that they would join in any revolt against Jesus, but they could become involved in his activities thus forfeiting their privileges in Christ. How do they meet this threat? By continually refreshing themselves in the Word and keeping busy for Jesus. The Christ-life is one of action and not hearing only. Thus Paul warns "Cling to the truths" and occupy for Christ.

"Is standing firm in the faith merely a matter of believing only?"

16. To that end, may the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who has so greatly loved us, faithfully supplying encouragement and unfailing hope, 17. go even further and by His grace, inspire you with the courage and confidence needed to make you active for Him in both words and deeds.

3 1. And now brethren, please pray for us. We long for the Lord's message to be glorified here and spread as rapidly here as it did among you. 2. Will you pray that we may be able to sidestep the malicious interference of bigoted and unreasonable men. For as you know, the faith of the Lord does not set well with every heart. Not all men have a readiness of mind to receive it. 3. Even so the Lord is faithful. He

will protect you and keep you from the Evil One.



KEEP. They needed His keeping. Satan was not only authoring outward persecutions, he was doing his dirty work inside the church. Some, trapped in the snare of fanaticism, were neglecting their jobs, loafing and tampering with the truth of Christ's coming. Paul must deal with this, and harshly. But first a kind word for those keeping themselves from undisciplined excitement.

4. We have the Lord's assurance that most of you are doing what we require of you and that you will keep on doing it. 5. To that end may He guide your hearts into a deeper experience of God's love, thereby enabling you to exhibit Christ's own patience. Then you will bear up under your sufferings just as He did, glorifying Him even more.

"What about those refusing to discipline themselves and follow your instructions?"

6. I now charge you my brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, keep away from every insubordinate brother who indulges in the easy going life, walking contrary to the instructions we gave you.



CHARGE. This is strong. Ten verses are devoted to the sin of lazy living. Besides the oral instructions which he left with them, there were those mentioned in his first letter. "What's the use of working?" some were saying, "If Jesus is coming so soon?" Others beheld the richer ones and said, "They ought to share with us, they can't take it with them." Paul rebukes such inexcusable behavior, for these people were bustling about in fanatical idleness. He strikes hard at the disorder in the church created by these easy-going busybodies and their undisciplined lives. To pre-

vent the spread of this laziness-disease, he enjoins separation as a corrective measure.

7. Do I have to tell you that you should imitate our example? You already know you are to do as we did. We certainly didn't lead any easy-going life when we were with you. 8. To the contrary, we refused to eat anyone's food without paying for it. We labored night and day to pay our own way. We purposely did this so as not to put a single person to any expense on our account.



IMITATE. Paul thought Jesus was coming soon, yet that didn't keep him from working and paying his own way. This was not merely to silence opponents who claimed he was in Gospel work for the money. But to demonstrate how Christians are to behave in the face of Jesus' soon coming. Jesus never resorted to idleness. He stayed on the job until the end. And so must we. By imitating his Master, Paul could justly ask his Thessalonians to imitate him. The disorderly ones were doing the opposite. These loafers and spongers were hindering the Gospel. Paul demands their separation. Before, he simply said, "admonish them." But now the problem has gotten worse.

9. And why did we work like that? Was it because we didn't have a right to expect support from you? No—we did it so you would have an example to follow. 10. When we were with you we established the guiding principle: "If a man won't work, don't feed him!" It is important that you apply that principle now.



PRINCIPLE. Paul had practiced the "no work, no eat" rule when he was with them, backing it with double work of his own. Even as he writes, he is sewing tents with Aquila (Acts 18:3). His remarks cover not merely those A.W.O.L. from their jobs, but also the pious sluggard who

didn't want to work and felt the church owed him a living. While Paul wouldn't give a penny to the religious sponge, he would quickly deny himself to feed the unfortunate. He had a great heart.

"How do you know this is going on at Thessalonica?"

11. I say this because word has come that some of you are shirking the business of making a living and have gone into the business of meddling in others' affairs. 12. These we warn—yea, command in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to return to the quiet discipline of the Christian life and make their own living.



MEDDLING. Paul makes a play on the Greek word for business, using it twice to picture the buzzing of these religious gadflies. They skip work to flit from one brother to another with fantastic ideas about Jesus' return, making extravagant claims for their insights. After a day of such meddling, they wouldn't have money for food and would have to sponge off others or draw on the church's benevolent fund. We have "flitters" today who chase about to hear some new truth, failing to live the truth they already have. Paul commands these people to cease their flitting and assume the discipline of a stable Christian life.

"If only a few are doing this, what about the others?"

13. As for the rest of you, my brothers, don't let the few who shirk their duty keep you from doing yours. Don't let yourselves become weary in doing what you know to be a right and a proper Christian walk. 14. If someone there refuses to obey the command which I have just given, take special note of him and avoid his company until he is ashamed of himself. 15. However, don't treat him as an enemy, you are to correct him as a brother.



TAKE NOTE. As soon as this letter was read, the guilty no doubt recognized themselves. When the speaker's words sounded, strange looks surely passed throughout the congregation. The separation was already at work. The disobedient ones were no longer "in." Names were not posted on the bulletin board, but a mild ostracism occurred when they got the "silent treatment." The aim, of course, was restoration, not banishment. Were a man to remain persistently stubborn, he would of course have to be excommunicated from the fellowship as a factious individual. Even then he was still to be regarded as a brother and not judged as an enemy.

16. May the Lord grant you His own peace in this very matter, as well as the others facing you—both now and forever. May His presence be with each one of you. 17. And now I sign my name, PAUL, in my own handwriting. This is my trademark to certify the genuineness of all my letters.



TRADEMARK. Paul was a letter writer. Much of his work was done by correspondence. It took time for mail to travel in those days. In between letters, certain zealous ones and even his enemies attempted forgeries as a means of promoting their own point of view. Chapter 12 hints at such a letter. Thus he adopted very early the habit of personally closing his letters as a mark of genuineness. Silas or Timothy likely served as a secretary to write the main body of this letter. But now observe how his benediction includes them "all." This is to assure even those whom he rebukes that they too have a place in his big heart.

18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you ALL!

"Amen." (This again is audience response upon hearing the letter read publicly. In time it crept into copies of Paul's letters.)